NATION

Heatwave scorches India, Banda sizzles at 47.6 Celsius

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

BSE drops 135 pts, NSE ends flat

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

India to criminalise doping supply chain with jail terms

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 22 MAY 2026 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU | 4 DHU'L-HIJJAH 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 131 | Pages: 8

Karnataka II PUC exam-2 records 46% pass rate

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Karnataka's II PUC exam-2 recorded a 46 per cent pass rate, with results announced on Thursday. Of the 80,535 students who appeared, 36,764 cleared the exam. Science stream recorded the highest pass percentage at 51 per cent, followed by Arts at 44 per cent and Commerce at 43 per cent. The consolidated pass percentage for 2026 rose to 92.25 per cent, up seven percentage points from last year. Overall, 96 per cent of Science students passed, compared to 93 per cent in Commerce and 83 per cent in Arts. Girls outperformed boys with a 47 per cent pass rate against 45 per cent. The exams were held from 30 April to 13 May. *—SALAR NEWS*

Iran formalises control over Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN, 21 MAY

Iran has announced the operational launch of a new regulatory body, the Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA), which has defined management boundaries for the Strait of Hormuz and made transit coordination and permits mandatory for vessels, state media and official posts on X said. According to the PGSA, the supervision zone extends from a line linking Kuh Mobarak in Iran to the south of Fujairah in the UAE in the eastern Strait, and from the end of Qeshm Island in Iran to Umm al-Qaiwain in the UAE in the west. The authority said all vessel movements within this zone "require coordination" with the waterway management body. *—ANI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 6

Cops save teen girl from suicide in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

A 16-year-old girl was rescued after threatening to jump from an apartment building in NRI Layout, Ramamurthynagar. The incident occurred around 11.30am when she climbed to the fifth floor. Police suspect issues involving her parents may have motivated her attempt, though the exact reason remains unclear. Residents alerted authorities after she began screaming and threatened to end her life. A rescue operation involving police and fire services was launched, and the girl was safely brought down, given first aid, and referred to NIMHANS for counselling. *—PTI*

HELP IS AVAILABLE. PLEASE CALL TELE MANAS AT 14416, OR SAHAI AT 080-25497777 FOR SUPPORT.

Indian students, workers lead exit trend in UK

LONDON, 21 MAY

UK net migration dropped sharply in 2025, with Indian nationals leading the exodus. The Office for National Statistics reported around 51,000 Indians left for study, 21,000 for work, and 3,000 for other reasons, followed by 46,000 Chinese. Ukrainians, Pakistanis, and Nigerians also featured among the top emigrants. The overall net migration fell to 1,71,000 from 9,44,000 under the previous government. The highest visa extensions for health and care workers went to Indians (107,306), with Indians also leading in Skilled Worker and Graduate Route visas. The decline is driven by fewer arrivals from outside the EU, and a 20 per cent decrease in total long-term immigration for 2024. *—PTI*

K'taka Cabinet flags SIR concerns, likely to move SC

Govt to ensure that no eligible citizen is denied voting right

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Karnataka's Cabinet on Thursday discussed safeguarding citizens' voting rights and raised concerns over lack of transparency in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil said.

The Cabinet also deliberated on whether to move the Supreme Court on issues related to SIR and whether the final electoral roll should be placed before the apex court prior to its formal publication. Patil said the discussions remained inconclusive and a final decision would be taken after further deliberations over the next three to four days.

The Election Commission has announced that the SIR process in Karnataka will begin on June 20. The last such exercise in the state was conducted in 2002, when there were 3.55 crore voters. The state now has 5.55 crore voters, with the final electoral roll scheduled for publication on 7 October.

Patil said the Cabinet expressed concern over reports from other states, including allegations that around 27 lakh voters in West Bengal lost their voting rights, along with objections raised in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere.

He said the government's primary concern was ensuring that no eligible citizen is denied voting rights due to procedural issues.

The Cabinet also discussed legal options, noting difficulties in approaching the Election Commission due to statutory protections and immunity.

It considered whether the matter could be taken to the Supreme Court and whether the final voter list could be submitted for judicial scrutiny before finalisation.

Patil said discussions on 10 to 12 issues were held but remain incomplete, with further consultations planned with the Chief Minister and party leaders. A final decision is expected within three to four days. *—Salar News*

A scuffle breaks out between cops and Youth Congress members during protest against NEET leak at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Thursday *—PTI*

K'taka to start seat allotment without NEET

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Karnataka Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar on Thursday announced that the state would proceed with counselling and seat allotment for engineering and other professional courses without waiting for NEET results, amid the ongoing controversy over the alleged NEET-UG paper leak.

Speaking at a Youth Congress protest held at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, Sudhakar said the decision was taken in the interest of students. He said counselling for engineering seats would begin after the Common Entrance Test (CET) results, which are expected to be declared next week.

The protest was attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, AICC Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala and several ministers. Leaders held T-shirts carrying slogans such as "PM is compromised" and "I am cockroach".

Siddaramaiah alleged that under the UPA government led by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh between 2004 and 2014, medical admissions through the All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT) were conducted without any paper leak controversies. He added that Karnataka earlier conducted one of the country's fairest CET systems before NEET was introduced in 2016. Siddaramaiah accused the Modi government of weakening the federal structure by imposing a centralised entrance examination despite education being on the Concurrent List of the Constitution. He demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and sought compensation for families of students who allegedly died by suicide following the paper leak controversy.

"Those responsible for the paper leak leading to student suicides should be treated as murderers," Siddaramaiah said. The NEET-UG 2026 examination, conducted on 3 May for, was cancelled later following paper leak. *—Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

WB mandates singing of 'Vande Mataram' in madrasas

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

—MAGNIFIC

The West Bengal government has issued an official order mandating the singing of 'Vande Mataram' at assembly prayers in all madrasas with immediate effect.

The order by the Directorate of Madrasah Education came nearly a week after the state's BJP government made singing the national song mandatory in all state-run and aided schools. Heads of institutions have been instructed to ensure strict compliance from all students.

The latest order stated the directive would apply to the government's model madrassas, government-aided madrasas, approved Shishu Shiksha Kendra and Madhyamik Shiksha Kendras, as well as recognised unaided madrasas functioning under the Minority Affairs and Madrasah Education Department.

A senior official of the department said the decision was made "with the approval of the competent authority" and was aimed at bringing "uniformity in assembly practices" across institutions under the department.

The move comes shortly after the Union proposed an amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, making obstruction to the singing of Vande Mataram a punishable offence. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Air India flight suffers tailstrike while landing at B'luru airport

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

An Air India aircraft with 181 passengers onboard experienced a tail strike during landing at Bengaluru airport on Thursday morning, leading to the aircraft being grounded for detailed inspection. The narrow-body A321 aircraft was operating flight AI2651 from Delhi to Bengaluru. An airline spokesperson confirmed the incident, stating the plane "experienced a tail-strike during landing". Despite this, the aircraft landed safely, and all passengers and crew disembarked normally.

A source explained that the plane encountered "wake turbulence" near landing, prompting the pilot to perform a go-around manoeuvre, during which the tail strike occurred. The turbulence was reportedly caused by a wide-body aircraft taking off nearby, though details about this aircraft remain unconfirmed. The flight, operated with an A321, had 181 passengers onboard.

The airline stated that the aircraft has been grounded for a thorough inspection, and the incident will be investigated following established procedures with relevant authorities. The return flight, AI2652 from Bengaluru to Delhi, has been cancelled, and alternative arrangements are being made for affected passengers. Ground teams in Bengaluru are providing assistance, and the airline has expressed regret for the inconvenience caused.

According to the US Federal Aviation Administration, "wake turbulence" results from lift-generated vortices trailing behind an aircraft, which can impact other aircraft depending on the vortices' strength, duration, and direction. *—PTI*

Pulwama attack mastermind killed in PoK

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

One of the masterminds of the 14 February, 2019 attack on Indian security personnel in Pulwama, which left over 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel dead, was killed by unknown gunmen in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK). Hamza Burhan had been designated a terrorist by the Union Home Ministry in 2022.

Burhan was allegedly involved in radicalising and indoctrinating youth in South Kashmir. Security agencies said he provided explosives and grenades to those who carried out the Pulwama attack. He was also found to be involved in the grenade attack on CRPF personnel on 18 November, 2020.

Burhan's killing comes after a series of attacks targeting members of groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Hizbul Mujahideen, attributed by local reports to "unidentified gunmen."

The Pulwama incident was carried out by a member of the JeM who rammed an explosives-laden car into a CRPF convoy. The attack led the Indian Air Force to launch a strike in Balakot, Pakistan, a few days later, raising tensions between the two countries. *—Agencies*

Ebola outbreak: India-Africa summit postponed

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

India and the African Union have postponed the India-Africa Forum Summit scheduled for 28 May to 31 May in New Delhi due to an Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO).

India and the African Union reaffirmed the importance of joint public health preparedness and response capacities across Africa, said the Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday.

"Following these consultations, the two sides agreed that it would be advisable to convene the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit at a later date," the MEA said.

India issues advisory

India has also issued a health advisory at the Delhi airport for passengers arriving from or transiting through the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and South Sudan.

It has asked those with symptoms, such as fever, weakness, headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, sore throat and unexplained bleeding, or exposure history, to immediately report to airport health authorities before immigration clearance.

Detailed SOPs related to the matter have already been shared with all states and Union territories, said sources. *—PTI*

THREE TRADEMARK APPLICATIONS FILED FOR 'COCKROACH JANTA PARTY' NAME

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Three separate trademark applications have been filed seeking rights over the name "Cockroach Janata Party", official records showed, as the satirical political outfit continues to gain rapid online traction.

The filings, made by lesser-known individuals including Azim Adambhai Jam and Akahnd Swaroop, as well as a proprietorship named "Cockroach Janta Party", seek registration under the category of political and social services.

The development comes amid growing attention on the satirical entity, which has gained millions of online followers in a matter of days for its digital commentary. Its X (formerly Twitter) account was recently withheld in India.

The outfit, also known as CJP, describes itself as the "Voice of the Lazy & Unemployed" and reportedly crossed 10 million followers on Instagram, even surpassing BJP's online following. *—PTI*

CJP's X handle withheld, founder starts new account

>>>More on Page 4

FACED REPEATED THREATS

Kerala woman alleges molestation, rape attempt at party in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

A 20-year-old college student has alleged that a man molested and attempted to rape her during a party in Madivala, Bengaluru. The victim, a native of Kerala, also alleged that the accused and an associate assaulted her friends and threatened her and her friends, police said on Thursday.

In her complaint, the woman — reportedly working part-time at a city cafe — alleged that the incident occurred on the night of 11 May, after she and others finished work and attended a party hosted by the cafe owner.

The complainant alleged that during the party, the cafe owner left with a friend to get food. At this point, one of the accused, Hainas, allegedly dragged her and attempted to rape her while under the influence of alcohol. She alleged that he held her hands and touched her private parts before two friends intervened and rescued her.

When her friends stepped in, the accused allegedly turned aggressive and issued threats. "He threatened. He would kill all of us if we called anyone for help or informed the police," she alleged in her statement.

The victim further stated that when she and others approached the police station around 12.30 am on 12 May to lodge a complaint, some of the accused allegedly threatened them again outside the station.

Following the complaint, a case was registered against the accused and his associates on 18 May under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, a senior police officer said, adding that the investigation is underway. *—PTI*

Three held for sexually harassing female students

MANGALURU, 21 MAY

Three men have been booked for allegedly sexually harassing three young women students near a waterfall in Belthangady taluk in Dakshina Kannada district, police reported on Thursday. The incident took place on 20 May when the students, who were studying in Mangaluru, visited the waterfall. The accused reportedly behaved inappropriately and subjected the women to sexual harassment. The victims resisted the advances. Local witnesses intervened, stopped the men, and alerted Belthangady police. The police were swift to detaine the suspects and registered the case under Belthangady police station jurisdiction.

The accused have been identified as Abdul Khader Altaf, 36, Faizal Adil, 27, and Usman Safir, 18, all from Kasaragod, Kerala. Police confirmed that further legal action will be taken against the suspects as per the appropriate law. *—PTI*

Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar Jayanthi set for 4 June

MYSURU, 21 MAY

Mysuru will celebrate Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar Jayanthi on 4 June with a grand procession. Additional Deputy Commissioner Aishwarya R on Thursday said this will honour the contributions of Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar towards education, arts, literature, culture, industries, health, agriculture and irrigation in the Mysuru kingdom. A procession carrying the Maharaja's portrait on a decorated vehicle will begin from Lakshminarayana Temple premises near Mysuru Palace, accompanied by dollu kunitha, maragalu kunitha, gaarudi gombe and a police band. Geetha Gayana, a public event at Kalamandir, and prize distribution for quiz competition winners will also be organised. Officials were directed to make necessary preparations for the celebrations. *—SALAR NEWS*

BJP has proven it can't even conduct exams: CM

'NEET leak will impact weaker sections of society more'

Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, Karnataka Youth Congress President Manjunath Gowda, National Youth Congress President Uday Bhanu Chib, CM Siddaramaiah, and AICC General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala during a protest at Freedom Park on Thursday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU,21 MAY

During a massive Youth Congress protest on Thursday at Freedom Park in the City over the alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG medical entrance exam, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have time and again proven that they are incapable of conducting examinations "let alone governing the country".

"It (BJP) has repeatedly been proven that apart from spreading hatred to win votes, they have no expertise in anything else," he said, addressing the gathering of protesters.

Recalling instances of paper leaks during previous BJP governments in the State under BS Yediyurappa and Basavaraj Bommai, Siddaramaiah noted that irregularities and corruption had surfaced in recruitment examinations, including Sub-Inspector and engineer recruitment tests. "For the first time in the State's history, an ADGP-rank police officer went to jail."

Siddaramaiah alleged that Modi, who should be looking into the problems faced by the country, was currently on a "trip to Italy".

"In the country, 67 per cent of the youth aged 20 to 29 are unemployed. Every year, 2 crore jobs should have been created in the 12 years of Prime Minister Modi's rule, totaling 24 crore jobs. But so far, not even 2 crore jobs have been provided," he alleged.

Siddaramaiah alleged that the NEET leak would disproportionately affect people from weaker sections of society.

"Those with money can afford repeated coaching, but the poor without money, and children from rural areas, cannot," he said. "This is evidence that they are neglecting the children of the poor, Dalits, backward classes, and minorities."

AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, who also spoke at the protest organised under the leadership of Karnataka Pradesh Youth Congress State President Manjunath Gowda, said that the "paper leak mafia" had led to the collapse of the education system.

He questioned the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA), alleging irregularities in paper setting and examination conduct, referring to the arrests made by CBI in the case. *—Salar News*

State won't reduce tax on petrol, diesel: CM

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday indicated no reduction in taxes on petrol and diesel by the State government. Instead, he accused the NDA government at the Centre for the skyrocketing prices.

"They increase, and we should reduce?" he said in response to a question. "You (the media) don't say anything when they raise prices. You ask me whether the State government will reduce the taxes, but you don't question when they increase prices."

Speaking to reporters here, he said, when Manmohan Singh was the Prime Minister, diesel prices were Rs 48 per litre, petrol was Rs 70 per litre, and gas was Rs 414 per cylinder.

"Now, how much are they? Who increased the prices?" he asked.

Petrol and diesel prices were increased by 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, the the second hike in less than a week amid the West Asia war. *—PTI*

DyCM DK Shivakumar and his wife Usha visits the Madhyaranga Temple, in Chamarajanagar district *—X @DKSHIVAKUMAR*

Mekedatu DPR is ready, to be submitted soon: DKS

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 21 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday said that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Mekedatu project has been prepared and will be submitted to the Centre "soon". The groundbreaking ceremony will be held after obtaining Union government approval, he added.

Speaking to reporters at Kollegal helipad and near the Madhyaranga temple, Shivakumar said that they are identifying alternate land to compensate for the forest area that will be submerged.

He had earlier said that around 600 acres of land is needed for the Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir project, but didn't specify how much of it was forest land

"There is a clear order to release 177 TMC of water to Tamil Nadu. We will discuss how to resolve this," Shivakumar said of the project planned on the Cauvery river. "The Supreme Court has ruled that Tamil Nadu has no right to object to the Mekedatu project and that the Central Water Commission must take a decision on it."

Notably, he said that the State has been receiving good rainfall over the last two years. "This year, we are discussing how to protect farmers if there is a rain deficit and how to address drinking water issues". On the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections, Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru Development Portfolio said that the "The election will be held as per schedule". *—ANI*

Time, muhurta will tell: DKS on when he will become CM

DK Shivakumar said on Thursday that time or muhurta will answer whether he will become the Chief Minister. Asked about his temple visits and offering prayers to Gods, he said, "You are there as God. People are God." When asked later in the day, Shivakumar said, "A good time will come."

Uttara Kannada bans water sports this season

UTTARA KANNADA, 21 MAY

The Water Adventure Sports Management and Monitoring Committee has banned water adventure sports in the Arabian Sea, the Sharavathi backwaters and the Aghanashini river region of Uttara Kannada from 19 May until the end of the monsoon season.

The ban is a major disappointment to tourists who frequently visit the district for beach and water-based recreation, particularly as the Department of Tourism had earlier issued work orders for boating and water activities at several popular beaches, including Gokarna Main Beach, Om Beach, Kudle Beach, Half Moon Beach, Paradise Beach, Murudeshwar Beach and Karwar Beach.

All these activities have now been temporarily suspended. The committee also stated that permission earlier granted for scuba diving at Netrani Island and tourist boating along the Aghanashini riverbank at Tadadi in Kumta taluk and in the Sharavathi backwaters near Honnavar and Kasarkod, has also been revoked. Pre-wedding set installations at Apsarakonda Beach in Honnavar will not be permitted during this period either.

The order stated that the decision was taken following weather department alerts regarding cyclonic conditions, strong winds and the onset of the monsoon. All water adventure activities along beaches and riverbanks have been halted with immediate effect in precaution. *—Salar News*

BJP High Command meets party cadre as BYV's term set to end

BJP's Karnataka in-charge Radha Mohan Das Agrawal, National joint secretary Shivprakash, State President BY Vijayendra and others at a party meeting on Thursday *—X@BYVIJAYENDRA*

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

BJP General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Radha Mohan Das Agrawal on Thursday indicated that the party may announce its State President soon, amid speculations about incumbent BY Vijayendra getting a second term.

Vijayendra, a first term MLA, is the son of BJP stalwart BS Yediyurappa. His term as President is set to expire in November.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with BJP leaders, including National Joint General Secretary (organisation) Shivprakash, National Vice President Baijayant Jay Panda, Vijayendra, Leaders of Opposition in Assembly and Council R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy and others in the City, Agrawal said that "It is a matter of time, and slowly we are approaching the announcement of our president once again."

He dismissed speculations that a decision has already been made. "In our party evaluation is a continuous process, and the national leadership is aware of all developments in the party," he said, adding that Vijayendra is "working". However, Agarwal added that the party follows the principle that a President can be given two terms.

When Vijayendra was made the President, it led to factionalism within the State BJP. But Agarwal instead said that AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge was instigating a fight between CM Siddaramaiah and DyCM DK Shivakumar so that he could become Chief Minister. *—Agencies*

Lokayukta books govt officials for sand mining

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

The Karnataka Lokayukta police have registered a suo motu case against senior officials of the Mines and Geology Department and the Bagalkot district administration over alleged large-scale illegal sand mining in the Krishna riverbed.

Those booked include the Director of the Mines and Geology Department in Bengaluru, the department's Deputy Director in Bagalkot, the Bagalkot Deputy Commissioner, and tahsildars of Badami, Mudhol, Jamakhandi, Hunagund and Ilkal taluks.

According to a Lokayukta press release, illegal sand mining was found to be rampant in Hunagund, Ilkal, Mudhol and Badami taluks after complaints were received regarding large-scale excavation in the Krishna riverbed. A discreet enquiry conducted by the Superintendent of Police, Karnataka Lokayukta, Bagalkot, reportedly revealed widespread irregularities and indiscriminate mining using machinery in violation of environmental norms.

Following the findings, Lokayukta police carried out surprise inspections at 24 locations. They found 65 tippers, 18 excavators, 14 mechanised boats, six tractors and one JCB machine allegedly engaged in illegal sand mining activities. Large quantities of illegally extracted sand were also found stored at multiple locations. Officils said prima facie evidence of widespread illegal mining and official negligence was established. *—PTI*

Woman killed after roof collapses due to heavy rain

VIJAYPURA, 21 MAY

A 55-year-old woman was killed after the roof of an old house collapsed following heavy rainfall in Nidagundi town of the district on Wednesday night. The deceased has been identified as Mahadevi, a resident near the Gaurishwara Temple area in the town. The continuous heavy rain in recent days had severely weakened and soaked the roof of the old house.

Mahadevi was sleeping inside the house during the night when the roof suddenly caved in during the night, causing fatal injuries and leading to her death on the spot. Her husband, Shivanand, who was sleeping outside the house at the time, escaped unharmed. Police and revenue department officials rushed to the spot and conducted an inspection. A case has been registered at the Nidagundi Police Station. *—Salar News*

Cyber cops bust 'call centre' targeting US citizens

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

The Karnataka State Cyber Command has uncovered a racket operating fake call centres in Bengaluru, allegedly impersonating a prominent US-based accounting firm and defrauding citizens in the US. Two men, Prashanth from Delhi and Akash from Uttar Pradesh, have been arrested.

Acting on a tip-off, officials searched four locations in Bengaluru.

The call centres posed as Intuit QuickBooks, a US accounting software firm, offering fake tax advice, licensing, and renewals. They also provided fake licence keys and fraudulent software.

The accused reportedly collected large sums in fees for these bogus services, using fake names resembling US officials to deceive victims.

Electronic devices and incriminating material, including 44 SSDs, two mobile phones, laptops, nine CPUs, scripts for victim interactions, and other accessories, were seized. The accused established a company called 'Circle Square LLC' and used shell companies to siphon US citizens' money.

Investigations continue to trace the flow of funds and laundering methods. *—PTI*

SIT, FORENSIC TEAM PROBE DHARMASTHALA CASE SITE

MANGALURU, 21 MAY

The SIT probing allegations of murders, rapes and clandestine burials in Dharmasthala, along with a forensic experts, on Thursday visited a site where human skeletal remains were reportedly found, officials said.

A three-member team of the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Bengaluru reached the Bangledudde forest area along with SIT officials and conducted a detailed inspection at the spot, they said.

The SIT probing the case had recovered human skeletal remains during a spot inspection at Banglegudde, a hillock located near Dharmasthala in Dakshina Kannada district, in September 2025, officials said.

Officials said the FSL experts were tasked with recreating the scene of the discovery, confirming the precise location where skeletal remains were found, and preparing a technical report for the SIT. *—PTI*

Vijayapura petrol pump vandalised by owner's son

VIJAYAPURA, 21 MAY

The son of a petrol pump owner allegedly vandalised and severely damaged the fuel station, causing major inconvenience to motorists. The incident occurred at Pawada Basaveshwara Indian Oil Petrol Pump on Narayanapura Road in Muddebihal town, owned by Sanganna Sangama.

Reports state that the owner's son, Muttanna, carried out the destruction, damaging fuel dispensing engines, nozzles, office records, laptops, CCTV cameras, and vandalising several vehicles.

Following the incident, CPI Mohammad Fashivuddin and PSI Sanjay Tippareddy visited the site, collected information, and registered a case against Muttanna, who has since been detained.

As the town has only one petrol pump, residents are forced to travel to nearby Hiremurala and Narayanapura for fuel. The extensive damage makes immediate repair unlikely.

Some private sellers are also exploiting the situation by selling fuel at nearly Rs 30 above the regular price, adding to consumers' burdens, residents alleged, calling for action. *—Salar News*

CLASSIFIED

CLOSING DOWN SALE
RAYMOND DISCOUNT SHOP
PICK ANY ITEM Rs. 500/- only
2 Nos. Raymond T/W Pant Pc
2 Nos. Raymond Shirt Pc
Raymond Pant Pc + Shirt Pc
COMBO GIFT BOX
RAYMOND 3Pc SUIT Length Rs.1000/-
AT NEW M.N. Next to K.F.C
DISPENSARY Rd. OFF COMMERCIAL
BANGALORE -1 Mob: 9343 03 7218

MUDA CASE HEATS UP

RTI activist Gangaraju held for driving with man on bonnet

MYSURU, 21 MAY

Kuvempunagar Police have arrested RTI activist Gangaraju for allegedly dragging a man on a car bonnet for nearly a kilometre in Mysuru following a dispute over the MUDA 50: 50 site allocation row, DCP Dr Harsha Priyamvada told Salar News.

Police registered an FIR based on a complaint filed by victim Dhananjaya, who alleged that he had paid Rs 20 lakh in cash in 2024 to Gangaraju and a MUDA employee, Nandeesh, in order to secure a site. Dhananjaya claimed that the title deed was never provided to him and that no refund was given despite multiple calls.

On Wednesday afternoon, when Dhananjaya again met Gangaraju, the latter replied that the matter had been discussed with Nandeesh. Dhananjaya then called Nandeesh on the phone and was asked to come to the MUDA office.

At around 3:15 pm, Gangaraju allegedly arrived in a car near the Sub-Registrar's Office in Ramakrishnanagar. When Dhananjaya attempted to speak to him, he allegedly drove the car away. Dhananjaya fell on the bonnet, and clung onto the windshield wiper for nearly a kilometre before Gangaraj stopped near the Kuvempunagar Police Station, after which the complaint was registered.

Notably, Gangaraju was one of the main complainants in MUDA 50: 50 land allotment case that involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his family. *—Salar News*

RTI activist Gangaraju, allegedly dragged Dhananjaya for nearly a kilometre, on Wednesday *—SCREENGRAB*

UP man arrested in Suvendu aide's murder case

BALLIA, 21 MAY

A 35-year-old alleged criminal, Naveen Kumar Singh, was arrested by the UP Special Task Force (STF) in Ballia in connection with the murder of Chandranath Rath, an associate of West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, police said. Singh, a resident of Thamhanpura village, was detained following inputs from the CBI. The STF recovered three pistols, two revolvers, and cartridges from Singh. Singh claimed Mannu, Gyanendra Pratap Singh, handed him firearms on 7 May. Singh, facing extortion and assault cases, was produced before a local court and sent to Mau jail. Meanwhile, another suspect, Raj Kumar Singh, was previously arrested, and Mannu and Golu Singh remain at large. Rath was shot dead in North 24 Parganas on 6 May. —PTI

— PTI

Court acquits Raj Thackeray in 2008 assault case

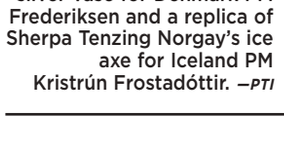
THANE, 21 MAY

A Thane court acquitted all accused, including MNS chief Raj Thackeray, in a 2008 case involving alleged assault on Railway Recruitment Board examinees at Kalyan railway station. The case had eight accused, with two dying during trial. Advocate Sailesh Sadekar confirmed the magistrate's decision, adding the detailed order is awaited. The defence argued that the evidence did not establish Thackeray's presence or any provocative speech. Witness testimonies failed to identify Thackeray, and no records such as admit cards were produced. The court declared the acquittal in open court, marking a significant legal development in the long-standing case. —PTI

Four-time BJP MLA elected Assam Speaker

GUWAHATI, 21 MAY

Ranjeet Kumar Dass, a four-time BJP MLA, was unanimously elected as the Speaker of the 16th Assam Legislative Assembly. Pro tem Speaker Chandra Mohan Patowary announced Dass's election, with no other nominations. Dass, from the Bhowanipur-Sorbhog seat, is serving his second term as Speaker and previously held the position in 2016. He was also a cabinet minister under CM Himanta Biswa Sarma from 2021 to 2026 and served as Assam BJP chief. Dass has been elected to the Assembly since 2011, representing the party in four consecutive terms. —PTI



— PTI

PM gifts muga silk stole to Italian PM Giorgia Meloni

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Prime Minister Modi presented Indian handicrafts, textiles and regional specialities to world leaders during his five-nation tour of the UAE, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy. Italian PM Giorgia Meloni received a Muga silk stole from Assam, a Shirui Lily silk stole from Manipur and a packet of Melody toffees. UAE President Sheikh Al Nahyan was gifted Kesar mangoes, Meghalaya pineapples and a Rogan painting. A Madhubani painting was givn to Dutch PM Rob Jetten, a Ladakhi wool stole and Loktak tea for Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson, a Bidri silver vase for Denmark PM Frederiksen and a replica of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay's ice axe for Iceland PM Kristrún Frostadóttir. —PTI

High turnout in peaceful Falta re-poll

BJP eyes virtual walkover after Jahangir exit; Polling conducted in heavy security presence

A securityman stands guard as people queue up to vote during the re-election to the Falta assembly seat in the South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on Thursday —PTI

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

West Bengal's Falta assembly constituency witnessed peaceful repolling on Thursday, recording an estimated 86.11 per cent turnout till 5 pm amid heavy security deployment and the dramatic withdrawal of Trinamool Congress (TMC) candidate Jahangir Khan two days before voting.

The repoll was ordered by the Election Commission following complaints during the 29 April polling that perfume-like substances and adhesive tapes had been applied to electronic voting machines at several booths.

Polling began at 7am and continued smoothly under the watch of around 35 companies of central forces and 30 Quick Response Teams deployed across 285 booths. Election officials said no major incidents were reported.

The BJP, which swept the 2026 West Bengal Assembly polls and formed the government for the first time in the state, sees Falta as a near-certain gain after Khan's withdrawal from the contest. A BJP victory would take its tally to 208 seats, though its effective strength in the Assembly would remain 207 after Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari decided to vacate Nandigram while retaining Bhabanipur.

Deployment of 500 CAPF companies in Bengal extended till 20 June

Adhikari described the turnout as "festival-like" and thanked voters for participating in large numbers.

The political focus, however, remained on Khan's exit. The controversial TMC leader, who had cultivated a strongman image in the constituency, announced on Tuesday that he would not contest the repoll, citing Falta's interests and Adhikari's promise of a development package.

The TMC distanced itself from the decision, calling it Khan's "personal choice" and alleging intimidation and post-poll pressure in the constituency. BJP candidate Panda claimed voters had "got freedom", while some residents said they felt able to vote freely for the first time in years.

Falta, located in the politically significant Diamond Harbour belt represented by TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, has emerged as a closely watched battleground after recent BJP gains in the region. —PTI

Bangladeshis will be handed over to BSF: Suvendu

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Thursday said Bangladeshi infiltrators detained in the state would be handed over to the BSF, instead of being produced before courts, as part of a broader "detect, delete and deport" framework. Adhikari added that the police commissioner and the RPF) had already received instructions. A weekly report would have to be submitted to the CMO as well. —PTI

HC orders CBI to probe 'hushing up' of RG Kar case

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

The Calcutta High Court division bench comprising Justices Shampa Sarkar and Tirthankar Ghosh on Thursday ordered setting up a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), to probe allegations of hushed-up charges in the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital.

The bench said the CBI's joint director, east, will head the team. The other two members of the team will be decided within 48 hours of the order. The court directed the team to file a report by 25 June. The doctor's parents moved the high court seeking further investigation into the incident, claiming that more than one person was involved in the crime.

Civic volunteer Sanjay Roy was sentenced to life imprisonment for the crime. —PTI

HC looks into pleas on WB's animal slaughter rules for Eid

KOLKATA, MAY 21

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday reserved judgment on petitions challenging a recent West Bengal government notification on animal slaughter during next week's Eid al-Adha. The West Bengal recently government issued guidelines warning of penal action on committing animal slaughter without a "fit certificate" from authorities. The state also barred animal slaughter in open public places. Senior lawyer Bhattacharya, appearing for one petitioner, stated that section 12 of the Act provides for relaxation for religious purposes. Opposing the pleas, the state and the Centre's lawyers submitted that the restrictions were issued as per judgments of this high court delivered in the years 2018 and 2022. —PTI

Calcutta HC grants TMC's Abhishek protection

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday granted Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee protection from coercive action till 31 July in an FIR over his comments at a public meeting last month.

Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya directed Banerjee to cooperate with the probe and to not travel abroad without the court's permission. He also asked why "irresponsible statements" were made by Banerjee, and whether Banerjee's comments matched his position in the party.

Banerjee moved the Calcutta high court seeking the quashing of the FIR over his comments against the leaders and workers of a rival party on 27 April during his election campaign. —PTI

Cong in TVK govt, Vijay adds 23 to team

CHENNAI, 21 MAY

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay expanded his Cabinet on Thursday by inducting 23 more legislators as ministers, including two from the Congress, which marked the return of the Congress to governance in Tamil Nadu after 60 years.

The swearing-in ceremony was held at the Lok Bhavan and Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office and secrecy to the minister-designates. TVK MLAs Srinath, S Kamali, C Vijayalakshmi and RV Ranjithkumar were initially sworn-in as ministers.

The Congress' S Rajesh Kumar, representing Killiyoor, and P Viswanathan, who won from Melur, took oath as ministers. The AICC in-charge for Tamil Nadu, Girish Chodankar, said the inclusion of his party MLAs in the Cabinet heralded a "turning point" in the political history of Tamil Nadu.

Congress Lok Sabha (Karur) MP Jothimani, "After 59 years, two MLAs of the Congress have joined the TN Cabinet.

This is a joyful moment for the Congress. Heartfelt congratulations to elder brother Viswanathan and younger brother Rajeshkumar."

Congress supporters hailed the inclusion of party MLAs in the Cabinet on 21 May, the death anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi.

23 MLAs were sworn in as ministers including three women. Vijay's friend Srinath, elected from Thoothukudi, was the first to take oath. Mohamed Farvas J, and N Marie Wilson represent the minorities. —PTI

The swearing-in ceremony was held at the Lok Bhavan and Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office to the minister designates—CMO TAMIL NADU

ROW OVER RECITING TAMIL THAI VAAZTHU AT SWEARING IN

CHENNAI, 21 MAY

A political controversy erupted on Thursday when the Tamil Thaai Vaazhthu (Tamil invocation song) was rendered last in the sequence of songs recited during the swearing-in of the newly inducted Tamil Nadu ministers at the Raj Bhavan here on Thursday.

The Left took exception to the Tamil anthem being sung after Vande Mataram and the national anthem at the swearing-in ceremony.

A similar row had surfaced when the Tamil anthem, which is traditionally sung at the commencement of state government functions, was recited third after Vande Mataram and Jana Gana Mana when Vijay was sworn in as CM on 10 May.

Stating that the Tamil Nadu Governor should prioritise the Tamil Thaai Vaazhthu, CPI state secretary M Veerapandian emphasised that the sentiments of Tamils should be respected.

He clarified that his party was not against the the national song or anthem but wanted the Tamil Thaai Vaazhthu to be accorded priority at government events.

CPI(M) state secretary P Shanmugam said the CM had said that the Governor, functioning as a representative of the Centre, follows its mandates. So 'Vande Mataram' will be rendered first in all official events attended by the Governor, the President, or the Vice President. — PTI

TN sets up ministry for Artificial Intel

The Tamil Nadu government established a dedicated ministry for Artificial Intelligence, making it the second state after Kerala to create a separate AI ministry. TVK legislator R Kumar, who won from Velachery, was administered the oath as minister by Governor Arlekar has been allocated AI, IT and Digital Services portfolios. —PTI

Kerala MLAs take oaths in multiple languages

T'PURAM, 21 MAY

The swearing-in of members of the 16th Kerala Legislative Assembly on Thursday became more than a formal constitutional ceremony, as the House witnessed moments reflecting the state's diversity, simplicity and political culture.

While some newly elected MLAs walked to the Assembly or arrived on bicycles, others took oath in different languages and in the name of God or through solemn affirmation, adding a personal touch to the proceedings. The day also saw political rivals setting aside the sharp exchanges of the election campaign as leaders greeted and smiled at one another after the ceremony.

The swearing-in also saw Pro-tem Speaker G Sudhakaran walking a few paces to congratulate Pinarayi Vijayan as he walked up for the swearing in ceremony.

The two, who had engaged in a verbal duel during the poll campaign after Sudhakaran chose not to renew his CPI(M) membership and contested as a UDF-backed independent candidate from Ambalapuzha, shook hands as if nothing adverse had ever transpired between them. — PTI

Kerala CM mentions his full name again

Chief Minister VD Satheesan took oath on Thursday as an MLA by again reading out his full name, Vadasseri Damodara Menon Satheesan. At his swearing-in as CM on Monday, he said his full name, drawing flak on social media as well as from some Congress leaders for using the caste surname 'Menon'. —PTI

BJP FIELDS ITS MLA FOR SPEAKER POLL

T'PURAM, 21 MAY

The BJP, which won three seats in the Kerala Assembly, will contest the Speaker election, state party president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Thursday.

The party has decided to field BB Gopakumar, the MLA from Chathannoor, for the post. The Speaker election will be held on Friday. While the UDF has announced Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan as its candidate, the LDF has not announced its candidate. — PTI

Critique not attack: HC to Chadha on 'sold' post

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

- Chadha, who left the AAP to join the BJP, filed a suit against social media posts allegedly damaging his reputation

The Delhi High Court on Thursday highlighted the fine line between political criticism and defamation, questioning if MP Raghav Chadha can be "sensitive" to social media posts criticising his political decisions. Chadha, who recently left the Aam Aadmi Party to join the BJP, filed a suit against allegedly malicious and fabricated social media posts damaging his reputation and personality rights. Senior advocate Rajiv Nayar argued that some posts contained profane content, claiming Chadha had "sold himself away for money". Justice Subramonium Prasad noted that while individuals have the right to dignity, free speech cannot be completely curtailed. The court observed that the posts appeared to be criticism of political decisions, but stressed the thin line between criticism and defamation. The court suggested appointing an amicus curiae to assist, emphasising the distinction between personality rights and political criticism.

Chadha seeks the immediate removal of false, AI-generated, and deepfake content circulating online. —PTI

'PRESSURED PARENTS TO VOTE'

HC issues notice to TVK on 'using' kids in poll campaign

CHENNAI, 21 MAY

The Madras High Court on Thursday issued notices to TVK founder and Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, the Election Commission of India (ECI) and others on a petition alleging corrupt practices during the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, including the use of children to influence voters.

A vacation bench comprising Justices G R Swaminathan and V Lakshminarayanan also issued notices to Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer, DMK president M K Stalin and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami. The matter has been posted for further hearing on 29 May.

The public interest litigation was filed by advocate L Vasuki from Cuddalore district, seeking a direction to the ECI to conduct an inquiry into alleged electoral malpractices.

According to the petition, Vijay, during an election rally at Chennai's YMCA Grounds on April 21, allegedly urged children to emotionally influence or pressure their parents over voting preferences. The speech was widely circulated across print, digital and social media platforms, the petitioner said.

Vasuki alleged that several videos later emerged online showing children attempting to influence their parents' voting choices.

The petition cited Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which defines corrupt practices including undue influence during elections, and argued that the allegations warranted immediate examination.

The plea also referred to allegations of cash-for-votes in constituencies including Mylapore, Alangulam and Thirumangalam, alongside reports of protests over discriminatory distribution of money to voters.

The petitioner claimed the ECI and state election authorities had failed to initiate any effective or transparent inquiry despite widespread allegations affecting the integrity of the electoral process. —PTI

BJP files police complaint against Rahul for traitor jibe

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Yuva Morcha Spokesperson Abhishek Dubey has filed a complaint asking for an FIR to be filed against Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, for allegedly calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah "traitors" during a public event on Wednesday.

This comes after Gandhi urged people to tell Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) workers that Prime Minister Modi, Shah, and the RSS are betraying the country by selling its economic system and attacking the Constitution.

Gandhi also said that the country was heading towards a severe economic downturn due to alleged economic mismanagement by the BJP-led government. "PM Narendra Modi has … handed over the economic system of India to Ambani, Adani and America," Gandhi said. —PTI

— PTI

27 Maoist cadres surrender in Ranchi

RANCHI, 21 MAY

A total of 27 Maoists surrendered before police here in the presence of Jharkhand DGP Tadasha Mishra. The ultras, from the banned CPI (Maoist), laid down arms before senior officers of Jharkhand Police, Jharkhand Jaguar, and the CRPF. "Twenty-seven Maoists, wanted in numerous cases, surrendered under 'Operation Navjeevan'. In 2026, 22 Maoists were killed, 44 arrested, and 29 surrendered. We urge the remaining to return to the mainstream," a senior officer said. Mishra stated efforts to eliminate extremism will continue, and the surrendering Maoists will be rehabilitated with full support. CRPF IG Saket Singh added, "We appeal to those who have not surrendered to come back to the mainstream."—*PTI*

Hindu petitioners seek free entry at Bhojshala

INDORE, MAY 21

Days after the Madhya Pradesh High Court declared Dhar's Bhojshala complex a Vagdevi temple, two petitioners from the Hindu side have demanded free entry for devotees and claimed that idols of Hanuman and other deities may be buried in the premises. Petitioner Goyal, associated with the 'Hindu Front for Justice', in his application to the ASI on Wednesday, said worshippers should not be charged even the existing Re 1 entry fee. Goyal also sought the opening of a locked room in the complex, claiming it formed part of the temple, and demanded removal of "Islamic symbols" from the premises.—*PTI*

Cockroach Janata Party's X handle blocked

CJP's Insta page gets 14.3M followers, beats BJP's 8.8M

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The X account of the Cockroach Janata Party, the satirical digital outfit that came up last week, was blocked in India on Thursday. Soon, came up another handle, 'Cockroach is Back'.

"This was expected as there were attempts to hack the account yesterday. But this is a self-goal by the government," founder Abhijeet Dipke said.

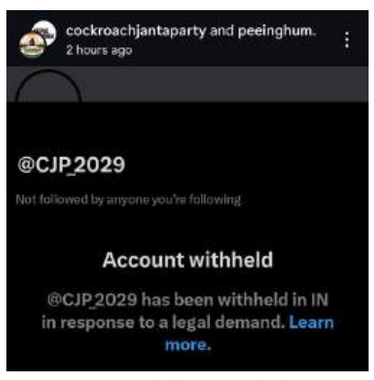
"I have now started a new account named 'Cockroach Is Back' on X," Dipke added. He said the team would pursue the matter legally. At 3.40 pm, over an hour after it started, the 'Cockroach Is Back' X handle had 16,800 followers.

The Cockroach Janata Party, which according to Dipke had 201,000 followers on X, came into being after a controversy over CJI Surya Kant using the words "parasites" and "cockroaches" while pulling up a lawyer in connection with his plea seeking a senior lawyer tag. The CJI later clarified that his remarks were directed specifically at individuals entering the legal profession using "fake, bogus degrees."

The Cockroach Janata Party came into being a day after the CJI's remarks on 15 May. It quickly went viral, attracting support from politicians, activists, artists and a large number of social media users.

While the X account became inaccessible in India on Thursday, the platform's Instagram page remains active with 14.3 million followers.

One post on Instagram drew comparisons with the BJP account, which has 8.8 million followers.


cockroachjantaparty and peeinghum.
2 hours ago
@CJP2029
Not followed by anyone you're following
Account withheld
@CJP2029 has been withheld in IN in response to a legal demand. Learn more.

The Cockroach Janata Party came into being a day after the CJI's remarks on 15 May. It quickly went viral, attracting support from politicians, activists, artists and a large number of social media users—*x*

GROWING RAPIDLY

Questioning the action against what he described as a satirical platform, Dipke said the account and the movement had been growing rapidly.

Dipke, who was associated with the AAP earlier posted on X that attempts were also made to hack the Instagram account. — *Agencies*

GREEN ACTIVISTS

Lawyers ask CJI to retract 'unfair comments'

EW DELHI, 21 MAY

A group of 72 lawyers, law students, law faculty, law researchers, and activists trained in law have written an open letter to CJI Surya Kant, demanding a retraction of the Supreme Court's recent observations on the practice of filing pleas to stall developmental projects.

A Bench comprising the CJI and another Judge had said on 11 May, "Show us even a single project in this country where these environmental activists have said that we welcome this."

The letter, released on Tuesday, states that the observations cast unjust aspersions on concerned citizens, communities and collectives defending the environment, within the law, statutory institutions, and jurisprudence of the SC over decades.

The signatories of the letter are members of the National Alliance for Justice, Accountability and Rights (NAJAR), a platform of law professionals.

"We are writing because the observations can extend beyond the outcome in one case. It relates to a broader jurisprudential shift: from viewing environmental litigation as an integral part of constitutional governance towards treating it as a suspect form of obstruction," said the letter. It added that the observations also pertain to a shift from recognising citizens as enforcers of statutory duties, towards dismissing them as "so-called environmental activists."

The letter asked the CJI to reaffirm its own environmental and constitutional values. — *PTI*

Heatwave scorches India, Banda sizzles at 47.6 Celsius

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Several states across India sweltered under the blistering heat on Thursday, with UP's Banda district again emerging as the hottest place in the country at 47.6 degrees Celsius. The IMD said heat wave conditions prevailed at several places of Haryana, Delhi, J&K, HP, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh.

Delhi continued to witness intense heat as temperatures hovered around 45 degrees Celsius. Delhi also reported its first heatstroke patient of the season, a 24-year-old student from West Bengal who was admitted to the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. Officials said he remains critical after being brought unconscious on Thursday morning.

The IMD issued a 'Red Colour Warning' for the next three days and an Orange Warning thereafter in view of the possibility of isolated heatwave conditions and warm nights across the state over the next week. In view of the severe heatwave, Chief Minister Adityanath has directed officials to exercise vigilance regarding relief and rescue operations.

The IMD centre in Lucknow said the enhanced radiation heating due to clear skies and dry weather, and the presence of hot winds associated with an anticyclone over central India in the middle tropospheric levels have aggravated heat conditions in the state. Similar conditions previaled in Haryana and Punjab. — *PTI*

A woman covers herself and a kid on a hot day in New Delhi —*PTI*

Rape case accused booked after grand welcome by friends

LUCKNOW, 21 MAY

Ghaziabad police have booked a rape accused and around a dozen of his supporters on charges of traffic obstruction for carrying out a procession outside the jail after his release on bail.

Hindu right-wing leader Sushil Prajapati was released on bail on 17 May. He had been jailed in connection with a rape case.

Police say a convoy of vehicles, part of the celebratory procession on his release, caused traffic disruption, affecting public safety through reckless driving and by blocking roads.

According to the police, on 8 August 2025, an LLB student accused Prajapati of raping her after making her consume a spiked cold drink. —*PTI*

Stay remains on counting Delhi Bar Council votes

The SC on Thursday refused to modify its order staying the counting of votes in the Bar Council of Delhi (BCD) elections after tampering allegations and asked the Delhi High Court to hear the pleas on 25 May. CJI Surya Kant Justices Bagchi and Pancholi was urged by senior advocate Vikas Singh that the 18 May order of the SC staying the counting of votes should be modified. "We will not modify our order," the Chief Justice said, referring to allegations that tampered ballot papers were being counted. —*PTI*

All HCs told to conduct online hearings: CJI

CJI Surya Kant said on Thursday that he had asked all HCs to conduct hearings online and most of them have already implemented it. The observation came when a lawyer mentioned a plea before a bench headed by the CJI seeking an urgent hearing of her plea that all Delhi courts should go online.

The lawyer told the Supreme Court that she has sought directions to all district courts to conduct hearings online for three months. The CJI then said, "District courts are under the HCs. Let them take a call." —*PTI*

— PTI

10,000 Kedarnath pilgrims rescued after landslide

DEHRADUN, 21 MAY

Joint rescue teams evacuated 10,450 pilgrims stranded on the Kedarnath route following a landslide at Munkatiya in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag. The landslide occurred late Tuesday night between Sonprayag and Gaurikund after heavy rainfall, blocking the highway. The debris caused a major obstacle, trapping many pilgrims. SDRF and NDRF launched a rescue operation, guiding the stranded through continuous rain and low visibility to safe locations. Debris clearing with JCB machines began immediately. The highway was reopened shortly after. SDRF Commandant Arpan Yaduvanshi said high alertness and quick response ensured the safety of the pilgrims during the operation.—*PTI*

2 minors killed in Delhi's Rohini over past rivalry

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Two minors were stabbed to death and a third injured during a violent clash in Rohini, police said. The incident occurred Wednesday in Sector-20, where three juveniles from Sultanpuri sought a boy suspected of sheltering suspects in an earlier murder. The youths, allegedly armed, fought locals, assaulting a woman and her son. As they fled, a 14-year-old from the rival group picked up a knife and attacked two minors, stabbing them in the neck and abdomen. Both victims died despite hospital efforts. A third injured boy is under treatment; police arrested a minor and are examining CCTV footage to establish details of the incident, linked to rivalries. —*PTI*

Twisha's absconding husband applies for bail

JABALPUR, 21 MAY

Samarth Singh, the absconding husband of a woman who died last week after allegedly being harassed for dowry, has filed a bail application in the Jabalpur High Court.

His wife, model turned actor Twisha Sharma, 33, was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal on 12 May. Her family accused her in-laws of pushing their daughter to death. Police registered an FIR naming Samarth Singh and his mother, former district sessions judge Giribala Singh. The Singhs claim she was addicted to drugs.

Police has announced a cash reward of Rs 10,000 for information leading to Samarth Singh's arrest and also approached the court for revocation of his passport. — *PTI*

Pak bombs its own people, says India at UN

UNITED NATIONS, 21 MAY

- He referred to estimates by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which documented 750 civilian deaths in Afghanistan in the first 3 months of 2026

India highlighted Afghan civilian deaths and the injuries caused by cross-border violence by Pakistani military forces, saying such "heinous acts" of aggression should not come as a surprise from a country that bombs its own people and conducts systematic genocide.

In a strong reply at the UN Security Council on Wednesday, India called out Pakistan's "long-tainted record" of genocidal acts after Islamabad's envoy at the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during a debate held during China's presidency of the Council for May.

"It is ironic that Pakistan, with its long-tainted record of genocidal acts, has chosen to refer to issues that are strictly internal to India," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni said at the annual UNSC Open Debate on 'Protection of civilians in armed conflict'.

He referred to estimates by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which documented 750 civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan in the first three months of 2026 due to attacks by Pakistani forces most of them air strikes.

Parvathaneni said the "world has not forgotten" that during the holy month of Ramzan in March, Pakistan carried out a "barbaric airstrike" on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul.

Citing UNAMA estimates, he said the "cowardly and unconscionable" act of violence killed 269 civilians and injured 122 others at the facility that "by no means can be justified as a military target."

"It is hypocritical to espouse international law while targeting innocent civilians in the dark," the Indian envoy said. — *PTI*

Uniforms must in UP colleges now

LUCKNOW, 21 MAY

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Thursday mandated uniforms for all universities and colleges in the state. As the Chancellor of all state universities, Patel issued this directive during a meeting at Jan Bhavan on Wednesday. No official order has yet been issued. Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna welcomed the move, stating, "Discipline measures being implemented by her in universities are in the interest of students."

The governor also issued strict instructions to teachers, emphasising that no act should harm the dignity and stature of the profession. She stressed the importance of holistic student development, urging teachers to attend classes on time and ensure the regular attendance of students. Patel highlighted the need to improve women's hostel conditions and keep them away from anti-social influences. She proposed introducing vocational and skill-oriented courses such as beautician training, mehendi art, GST, bindi manufacturing, accountancy, and millet-based food preparation to make female students self-reliant and employable. The governor also stressed promoting organic farming and encouraging students to adopt organic cultivation. —*PTI*

Three-day transport stir begins in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Commuters faced hardships while travelling in certain areas as transport and taxi unions began a three-day strike in the Delhi-NCR on Thursday to protest against a city government cess and rising CNG prices.

The three-day strike till 23 May is primarily against the Delhi government's decision to hike the environment compensation cess on commercial vehicles.

Commuters faced difficulties at some of the busiest places in the capital like the New Delhi Railway Station, Anand Vihar, Mandi House metro and other locations.

The strike call was given by the AIMTC, the apex body of truckers, private buses, taxi and maxi cab operators, on Tuesday.

"We support efforts to reduce pollution, but despite collecting nearly Rs 1,500 crore through the Environmental Compensation Cess in the last 10-12 years, the government has not used the funds for pollution control," Harish Sabharwal, the President of the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) said in an interview to PTI.

Euro-VI vehicles were sold to us as pollution-free variants, yet pollution taxes are still being imposed on them, which is contradictory. The government must come forward with practical solutions, Sabharwal added. — *PTI*

AMID RISE IN BOTOX USE

The CDSCO advisory comes as the popularity of injectable aesthetic procedures is rising—*x*

Injectable cosmetics not permitted: Govt

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Cosmetic products supplied in injectable form do not fall under the definition of cosmetics as per the law and are not permitted for use by consumers, professionals or aesthetic clinics, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) said.

The advisory by the CDSCO comes amid the growing popularity of injectable aesthetic procedures promoted as "cosmetic" treatments in beauty clinics and wellness centres.

The clarification is aimed at preventing the misuse of cosmetic products for treatment purposes and ensuring consumer safety, particularly as non-surgical aesthetic procedures gain popularity in urban centres, a source said.

The move also seeks to curb misleading advertising and unauthorised cosmetic practices by clinics and individuals.

In a public notice issued on 18 May, the CDSCO said that cosmetics are intended only to be "rubbed, poured, sprinkled or sprayed" on the body for boosting attractiveness.

The CDSCO also warned against misleading claims and the use of prohibited ingredients in cosmetic products, saying such violations attract action under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Cosmetics Rules, 2020.

The CDSCO said cosmetics are permitted only for their intended use and cannot be used for treatments.

The notice added that the list of generally not recognised as safe (GNRAS) and restricted ingredients is published by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). — *PTI*

Bandra stone-pelters nabbed after attack on cops: Fadnavis

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Thursday that some people threw stones at the police during the demolition drive in Bandra East, and after some arrests were made. The police acted after being attacked, the CM added. The Western Railway is carrying out an anti-encroachment drive in Gareeb Nagar slum near the eastern side of the Bandra railway station as per the Bombay High Court's directions.

It wanted to clear unauthorised shanties to clear the area for upgrading railway infrastructure, the WR has said.

Three police constables were injured in stone-pelting on Wednesday after the authorities razed an illegal mosque. At least 10 persons were arrested in connection with the violence. — *PTI*

The anti-encroachment drive underway at the Gareeb Nagar slum area in Mumbai on Thursday —*PTI*

FORESTS PAY THE PRICE

A forest fire rages through Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday. The Kangra valley, lower hill regions and parts of the Dhauladhar range near Palampur and Nagrota Bagwan are among the worst-hit areas, with flames destroying green cover and threatening local biodiversity —PTI

How close are India and Pak to another conflict?

A year has passed since conflict broke out between India and Pakistan, briefly raising fears of an all-out war between the two nuclear powers.

Both sides used new weapons against one another, including cruise missiles, short-range ballistic missiles and drones. The level of mistrust and sharp rhetoric worsened considerably, testing regional partnerships.

Civilians living along the Line of Control bore the brunt of Operation Sindoor. A house damaged in cross-border shelling by Pakistan at Behra village in the Mendhar sector of Poonch district, on 10 May, 2025 —PTI

What happened last year?

The war broke out last May following a terrorist attack that killed 26 civilians in the Pahalgam area of Indian Kashmir on 22 April.

Within days, Indian police claimed the Pakistan-based militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba was behind the attack. Pakistan vehemently denied any involvement.

On 7 May, India launched Operation Sindoor against alleged terrorist strongholds in Pakistan, which prompted a Pakistani retaliatory attack, Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos. Dozens of people are believed to have been killed.

The four-day conflict came to an end with a ceasefire on 10 May announced by the Trump administration, which claimed to have mediated the deal. This irritated India, but Pakistan nominated US President Donald Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

India claimed victory, boasting of its ability to deliver precise attacks far inside Pakistani territory, exposing weaknesses in its rival's air defences. Pakistan, meanwhile, claimed to have shot down five Indian fighter jets (which India denies).

Political ramifications

After leading Pakistan's military response to India, the chief of army staff, Syed Asim Munir, was elevated to field marshal, and then to the post of the country's first chief of defence forces.

Munir's influence has only grown since. He has become very close to Trump and has been a key figure in the negotiations between the US and Iran to bring an end to their war.

In India, Operation Sindoor was seen as a win for the Modi government's decisive foreign policy, and was a moment of rare political consensus in the country.

In the weeks that followed the attack, security operations in the Kashmir valley shut down several tourist sites. This led to a sharp decline in visitor numbers and severely affected local businesses. Security operations also targeted civilians, alarming human rights experts.

A YEAR AFTER WAR

Shifting regional dynamics

The war highlighted Pakistan's cooperation with both China and Turkey. The Pakistani military used Chinese-built fighter jets, China-enabled satellite-based intelligence and missiles and Turkish-made drones in its attacks.

After the war, Pakistan also signed a new deal with the Trump administration to develop Pakistan's oil reserves, and a defence pact with Saudi Arabia, a staunch US ally.

India had pursued a decade-long push to isolate Pakistan diplomatically, which made Pakistan's increasing bonhomie with the US and Gulf states particularly awkward.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's once-close relationship with Trump, meanwhile, began to deteriorate over US tariffs and India's purchase of Russian oil.

Modi's ill-timed visit to Israel and the visible lack of influence in the US–Iran war has also raised questions about India's professed role as a regional leader. It has highlighted the limits to India's strategy of balancing its partnerships, especially during conflict.

India's attempts to engage in proactive diplomacy, dispatching delegations of MPs and former diplomats to more than 30 countries over the past year, haven't done much to convince the world that Pakistan was the aggressor in their conflict.

Where do things go from here?

One year on, both India and Pakistan have signalled a resolve for further escalation in future conflicts.

Despite a sliver of hope for secret backchannel talks, India continues to give stern warnings to Pakistan over its alleged support to terrorist groups.

India has also reiterated that a major water-sharing treaty between the countries would remain suspended until Pakistan takes steps to end its support for terrorism.

In response, Pakistan has made clear any attempt to target Pakistan again would "trigger consequences" that would not be "geographically confined or strategically or politically palatable for India".

The shifting geopolitics and heightened rhetoric have narrowed the space for any prospects of meaningful dialogue between the two. The ceasefire holds for now, but the conflict and the lack of trust continue unabated. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساہر

Iran arms civilians as Don threatens new strikes

Weapons are now regularly brandished in Tehran, an increasing show of defiance as US President Donald Trump threatens he could restart the war with Iran should negotiations break down and the Islamic Republic refuses to release its grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian Revolutionary Guard members now regularly show the public in Tehran how to handle Kalashnikov-style assault rifles. Parades through the capital feature military vehicles mounted with belt-fed Soviet-era machine guns. And at one mass wedding, a ballistic missile, like the one that rained down cluster munitions on Israel, adorned the stage.

The weapons displays reflect the genuine threat Iran faces: Trump has suggested American forces could seize Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium by force and previously said that he sent arms to Kurdish fighters to pass onto anti-government protesters.

But they also offer reassurance and motivation to hard-liners and provide entertainment at a time of great uncertainty, when Iranians are facing mass layoffs, business closures and spiralling prices for essential goods.

Suggesting more hard-liners will be armed could also help suppress any new demonstrations against Iran's theocracy, which violently put down nationwide protests in January in a crackdown that activists say killed over 7,000 people and saw tens of thousands detained.

"This is necessary for all our people to get trained because we are in a war situation these days," said Ali Mofidi, a 47-year-old Tehran resident at a weapons training Tuesday night. "If necessary, everyone should be available and know how to use a gun."

> Government officials say more than 30 million people in Iran — home to a population of some 90 million — have volunteered via an online form to lay down their lives for Iran.

Iran has repeatedly sought to project strength during the war

For months, state television and government-sponsored text messages have bombarded the public with calls to join the "Janfada," or the "ones who sacrifice their lives".

At one point, hard-liners encouraged families with boys as young as 12 to send them to the Revolutionary Guard to work checkpoints— which Amnesty International denounced as a war crime.

Government officials say more than 30 million people in Iran — home to a population of some 90 million — have volunteered via an online form or at public gatherings to lay down their lives for Iran's theocracy. There is no way to confirm that figure.

But there have been several public announcements and presenters have appeared armed during live programs on state TV, as part of efforts to feed the fervour.

"Looking back at the moment I registered my name, I realise I wasn't truly contemplating the dangers of fighting on the front lines. In that moment, like everyone else, my thoughts were solely on Iran," wrote journalist Soheila Zarfam in a column for the state-owned Tehran Times newspaper. "My life might end, but Iran would endure, and that was all that truly mattered."

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi has criticised the public weapons demonstrations, particularly footage of young boys handling assault rifles, saying: "Scenes like these are reminiscent of child hostage-taking and arming by groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, and militias in Sudan and Congo."

Weapons training, once unusual, becomes a norm

A recent government-organized demonstration by nomads in Iran saw them carrying everything from bolt-action Lee–Enfield rifles of the British Empire to a blunderbuss, a predecessor of the shotgun more familiar to the age of pirates on the high seas.

But during weeks of an unsteady ceasefire, most of the weapon demonstrations appear focused on Tehran, not the rural areas where there is a tradition of keeping rifles and shotguns at home.

At a demonstration Tuesday night in Tehran, male and female participants divided into separate classes. Hadi Khoosheh, a member of the Revolutionary Guard's all-volunteer Basij force and trainer, demonstrated how to handle a folding-stock Kalashnikov-style assault rifle. "At the end of the training those who completed the course will receive a card titled 'Janfada,' proving they have received basic and preliminary training for this type of gun and they are able to use it if, God forbid, something happens to our country," Khoosheh said. "Definitely we will stand against (the Americans) and won't give up even an inch of our soil," said Mofidi, the man at the training. "No matter if they come from the sea or land, we will stand by our flag." —*PTI*

A member of the Revolutionary Guard's volunteer Basij force shows how to handle a Kalashnikov-style assault rifle during a weapons training class in Tehran, Iran —PTI

India abstains as UN backs stronger climate obligations amid US oppn

India abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly on a resolution urging countries to comply with their obligations on climate change, arguing that the text undermines the established framework of global climate negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The 193-member Assembly adopted the non-binding resolution on Wednesday with 141 votes in favour, eight against and 28 abstentions. Countries voting against included the United States, Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia. India was among the abstaining nations.

The resolution welcomed the July 2025 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which held that states have legal obligations under international law to protect the climate system and that failure to do so could amount to an internationally wrongful act.

Moved by Pacific island nation Vanuatu, the resolution called on countries to implement stronger climate action in line with the Paris Agreement, including measures aimed at limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

India said it had participated constructively in negotiations and repeatedly raised concerns during discussions on the draft. However, New Delhi maintained that those concerns were not adequately addressed in the final text.

In an explanation of vote, Petal Gahlot, First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission to the UN, said the adoption of the resolution does not create binding obligations for India.

"Our obligations arise only from outcomes adopted under the UNFCCC process," Gahlot said, adding that India therefore could not support the resolution.

India argued that the text failed to clearly reflect the "advisory and non-binding" nature of the ICJ opinion and risked elevating it to a quasi-binding status.

"We are seriously concerned that the resolution undermines the sacrosanct architecture of the UNFCCC process," Gahlot said. "It attempts to impose obligations on developing countries that have not been multilaterally agreed upon. This is a dangerous precedent."

India has consistently maintained that climate negotiations must remain within the UNFCCC framework, which is based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities". Under this principle, developed countries

The 193-member Assembly adopted the non-binding resolution on Wednesday with 141 votes in favour —PTI

— as the largest historical emitters of greenhouse gases — are expected to take the lead in reducing emissions and in providing climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building support to developing nations.

Indian officials also expressed concern that the resolution prescribes mitigation pathways and external benchmarks that could expose countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to judicial or quasi-judicial scrutiny.

According to India, this would undermine national policy space and weaken the "bottom-up" structure of the Paris Agreement, under which countries determine their own climate targets based on national circumstances.

Another major objection raised by India was the absence of explicit references to climate finance in the text.

Gahlot noted that climate finance commitments agreed in 2024 already fall short of the needs of developing countries and said the omission was particularly problematic in a resolution dealing with states' obligations on climate change.

"It is a serious omission," she said, stressing that financing, technology transfer and capacity-building remain essential for developing countries pursuing energy transitions.

India further argued that sustainable development and poverty eradication remain overriding priorities for developing nations and warned against climate measures that could constrain economic growth and energy access.

"Any transition in energy systems must therefore be just, orderly and equitable," Gahlot said. "The resolution does not adequately recognise these imperatives and constrains policy space for developing countries."

At the same time, India emphasised that it did not vote against the resolution because of its longstanding support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), many of which face existential threats from rising sea levels and extreme weather events.

"It is for this reason that despite our concerns not being addressed in this resolution, India did not vote against it," Gahlot said.

The vote came despite reported efforts by the United States to persuade countries to withdraw support for the measure. According to reports, the Trump administration had urged governments to pressure Vanuatu to pull the resolution, arguing that it could expose countries to legal and financial liabilities.

Before the vote, Tammy Bruce, the US deputy ambassador to the UN, criticised the resolution as "highly problematic", saying it included "inappropriate political demands" relating to fossil fuels and climate policy.

The final version of the resolution was moderated during negotiations to secure broader backing. References to creating an "International Register of Damage" to record climate-related claims were removed after consultations.

Still, supporters of the resolution described the ICJ opinion as a landmark moment in international climate law.

Vanuatu's ambassador to the UN, Odo Tevi, said the measure was essential because communities in vulnerable island nations were already suffering severe consequences of climate change.

"The harm is real and it is already here," he said, referring to droughts, rising seas and failed harvests affecting Pacific islands.

Pacific nations have for decades warned that climate change threatens their survival.

In Tuvalu, where the average elevation is about two metres above sea level, much of the country is projected to be underwater at high tide by the end of the century. In Nauru, the government has begun selling passports to raise funds for possible future relocation efforts. —*PTI*

Trump to talk to Taiwan Prez about arms sale

WASHINGTON, 19 MAY

US President Donald Trump has said he will speak with Taiwanese leader Lai Ching-te about a potential arms sale, a rare break from diplomatic tradition. Since 1979, Washington and Taiwan have had no direct contact, following the US recognising Beijing. Beijing claims Taiwan as its territory and opposes US arms sales, urging the US to "stop sending wrong signals to the separatist forces." Trump, who praised his relationship with China's President Xi, stated he would "speak to him" and that he will decide on a $14 billion arms package, including anti-drone and missile systems. The US remains bound by the Taiwan Relations Act to support Taiwan's defence, but China has delayed a US official's visit, pending Trump's decision. *—PTI*

3 Indians among 274 climb Everest, set new record

KATHMANDU, 21 MAY

A new record was set as 274 climbers, including 150 Nepalese sherpas, successfully reached Everest's summit from Nepal's side in a single day. All arrived at the 8,848.86-metre peak on Wednesday, with three Indians among them—Tulasi Reddi Palpunoori, Sandeep Are, and Ajay Pal Singh Dhaliwal. Rishi Ram Bhandari, general secretary of the Nepalese Expedition Operators Association, confirmed the record, noting 502 climbers had permission this spring. Previously, in May 2019, 223 climbers summited Everest in a day. On Thursday, India's Lakshmikanta Mandal also reached its peak. Nepal's Kami Rita Sherpa broke his own record with his 32nd ascent, while Lhakpa Sherpa became the first woman to climb Everest 11 times in a season. *—PTI*

Oppn protests as Balen skips Nepal Parl again

KATHMANDU, 21 MAY

Opposition lawmakers in Nepal on Thursday disrupted Parliament proceedings and raised slogans against Prime Minister Balendra Shah 'Balen' over his continued absence from the House, forcing Speaker DP Aryal to adjourn proceedings for half an hour. Members of Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, Shram Sanskriti Party and Rastriya Prajatantra Party shouted slogans demanding the prime minister answer in Parliament. Nepali Congress leader Arjun Narasingha KC questioned whether Shah was "an emperor of a separate island" when issues such as disaster management required attention. This was the third such disruption since the session began last week.*—PTI*

UN conclude cases of Yugoslavia, Rwanda atrocities

THE HAGUE, 21 MAY

The UN tribunals established to prosecute Yugoslavia's 1990s disintegration and the 1994 Rwandan genocide held their final session on Wednesday, marking the end of decades of justice efforts. Judge Iain Bonomy called it "a truly historic milestone," as the proceedings involving Félicien Kabuga, the alleged genocide financier, concluded. Kabuga, in his 90s and suffering severe dementia, died Saturday after remaining in detention since 2020 when he was found unfit for trial. His death, six years after his arrest outside Paris, symbolises the crisis of international justice, with countries limiting action. The tribunals convicted 155 people and led to the creation of the International Criminal Court in 2002, which still faces challenges, including non-cooperation from some nations. *—PTI*

Bibi will do what I want with Iran: Trump

As Trump says deal is near, report claims rift with Netanyahu

TEHRAN, 21 MAY

US President Donald Trump claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will do "whatever I want" in regards to Iran, amid a US media report that the two had a tense phone conversation about the future course of action.

"He's a very good man. He'll do whatever I want him to do... he's not treated right in Israel," Trump told reporters on Wednesday. Trump added that he was so popular in Israel that he might could run for the Prime Minister post there after his term ends in the US.

However, an Axios report on Wednesday claimed that Netanyahu's "hair was on fire" during a call with Trump a day earlier. Citing sources, the report claimed that Netanyahu wanted to resume strikes to further degrade Iran's military capabilities and destroy its critical infrastructure, while Trump is biding time for a deal.

This comes amid reports that the US has submitted a new ceasefire proposal through Pakistan, and Iran is reviewing the proposal, although there are no official comments. Axios also reported that a revised peace memo was drafted by Qatar and Pakistan with input from the other regional mediators, but it wasn't immediately clear if they were the same.

Trump had earlier said he put off striking Iran on the request of Arab countries. But Axios claimed that Netanyahu is highly sceptical about the negotiations.

US President Donald Trump with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House earlier *—WHITE HOUSE*

Trump continues to say he thinks a deal can be reached, but that he's ready to resume the war if it isn't.

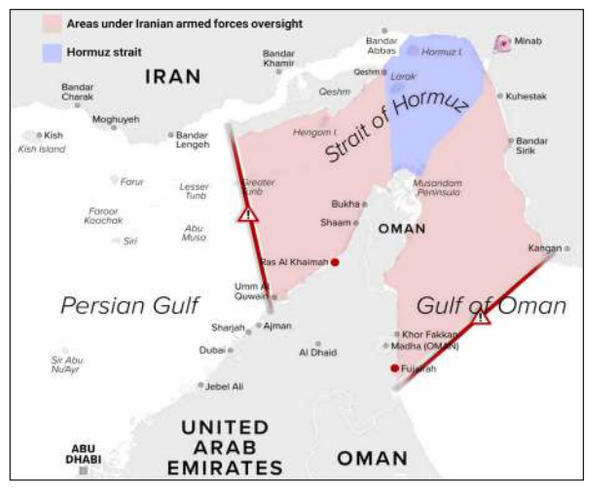
"The only question is, do we go and finish it up, or are they gonna be signing a document. Let's see what happens," he said on Wednesday. Later, he said the US and Iran were "right on the borderline" between getting a deal and resuming the war.

"If we don't get the right answers, it goes very quickly. We're all ready to go. We have to get the right answers," Trump said.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei reiterated that Tehran wants the war to end on all fronts, "including Lebanon".

However, it was unclear if Israel would agree to this, as at least four people were killed in Gaza, and one in Lebanon, according to National News Agency and Wafa respectively. Israel also issued more evacuation orders for Lebanese towns, where it aims to set up a security zone to target the Hezbollah militants. *—Agencies*

IRAN'S NEW HORMUZ AUTHORITY CLAIMS CONTROL OF WATERS PAST FUJAIRAH



The Persian Gulf Strait Authority released a map defining its boundaries of control over the Strait of Hormuz *—X@PGSA_IRAN*

TEHRAN, 21 MAY

Iran defined its boundaries of control for the Strait of Hormuz, with the area extending far beyond the crucial waterway through which nearly a fifth of the world's oil once flowed.

The newly launched Persian Gulf Strait Authority (PGSA) stated on X that the supervision area starts from the line connecting Kuh Mobarak in Iran and the south of Fujairah in the UAE in the east of the Strait of Hormuz, to the line connecting the end of Qeshm Island in Iran and Umm al-Qaiwain in the UAE in the west of the Strait of Hormuz.

Ships seeking to traverse through the narrow Strait will need to get permission from the Iranian entity, it added. The PGSA will also regulate how many ships are allowed to pass through the Strait. Ships have reportedly been paying a fee, in Chinese Yuan or cryptocurrency.

However, the UAE called the PGSA a "pipe dream", with senior presidential advisor Anwar Gargash stating that Iran was "encroaching" on Dubai's sovereignty. *—Agencies*

Munir flies to Tehran as Naqvi meet Araghchi

Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir was received by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during his visit last month *—X @ARAGHCHI*

TEHRAN, 21 MAY

Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir is likely to travel to Tehran on Thursday as Pakistani Interior Minister Syed Mohsen Naqvi met Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, according to state media.

Iranian state media stated that that Munir and Naqvi's visits are part of a broader diplomatic push for negotiations. Pakistan has been acting as the mediator between Iran and the US.

Naqvi, who arrived on Wednesday, also met Iranian Interior Minister and the President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The details of the meetings are not immediately clear, but Iranian officials have said that they are negotiating "in good faith" with Washington. *—Agencies*

Myanmar's junta recaptures two towns near India, Thai borders

Junta troops after retaking Mawdaung, near the Thai border *—MOI*

BANGKOK, 21 MAY

Myanmar's military-backed government said it has regained control of two towns near the country's borders with India and Thailand, as it seeks to reassert control of regions long held by resistance forces.

State-run newspaper Myanma Alinn reported on Thursday that the army regained control of Tonzang in northwestern Chin state, on Wednesday after 10 days of fighting. The town lies about 25 km from the Indian border and had been under the control of Chin ethnic militias and allied resistance forces since May 2024.

A day earlier, the newspaper said the military had also retaken Mawtaung in southern Tanintharyi region after a two-week operation. The town is strategically important for border trade with Thailand and had been controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU) and allied resistance groups.

The recaptures come as Myanmar's military has regained momentum in the conflict since mid-2025 following China-brokered ceasefires, increased troop numbers under a conscription drive, and junta chief Min Aung Hlaing's invitation to armed resistance groups for fresh peace talks. Chin and Tanintharyi have seen intense conflict since the army seized power from elected Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021. *—PTI*

UN, partners seek $710M for Rohingya refugees

The United Nations and its partners, in close coordination with the Bangladesh's government, appealed for USD 710.5 million to meet the most critical needs of Rohingya refugees in the Cox's Bazar camps and on Bhasan Char, as well as local host communities. The appeal — 26 per cent lower than in 2025 — covers only the minimum required to sustain lifesaving assistance for 1.56 million people.

US indicts Fidel's brother Raul Castro

The USS Nimitz Carrier (back) in the Caribbean Sea near Cuba; former president Raul Castro (inset) *—X@SOUTHCOM*

MIAMI, 21 MAY

Federal prosecutors on Wednesday announced criminal charges against former Cuban president Raul Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes flown by Miami-based exiles.

The indictment accuses Raul, the brother of the fabled Fidel Castro, of ordering the shootdown of two small planes operated by the exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Raul, who turns 95 next month, was Cuba's defence minister at the time. The planes were allegedly dropping leaflets urging Cubans to rise up against their Socialist government.

"For nearly 30 years, the families of four murdered Americans have waited for justice," acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said in Miami. In addition to Raul, five Cuban military pilots were charged with murder and destruction of an airplane.

Asked to what lengths American authorities would go to bring Castro to face charges in the US, Blanche said: "We expect that he will show up here, by his own will or by another way."

The US has issued a warrant for then Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro before abducting him in January.

While he retired in 2021 as head of the Cuban Communist Party, Raul is widely believed to be the most powerful person in Cuban politics. His grandson, Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro, met secretly with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the CIA Director earlier.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel condemned the indictment as a political stunt that sought to "justify the folly of a military aggression."

However, US President Donald Trump said that Washington was "freeing up Cuba". He has imposed an energy blockade on Cuba, crippling its economy. *—PTI*

US CLOSES INDIA-BASED CALL CENTRE OVER ELDERLY FRAUD

NEW YORK, 21 MAY

US authorities have shut down an India-based call centre accused of defrauding hundreds of elderly Americans through tech support scams, following an investigation that resulted in the conviction of five telemarketing fraudsters.

The FBI Boston also arrested and convicted a former employee of the call routing firm allegedly used by the scammers.

According to investigators, Adam Young, 42, of Miami, and Harrison Gevirtz, 33, of Las Vegas, admitted operating a telecommunications business that knowingly supported fraudulent schemes targeting vulnerable victims in the US and abroad. *—PTI*

Australia fines X $4,65,000 for online safety breach

MELBOURNE, 21 MAY

An Australian federal judge fined X Corp 6,50,000 Australian dollars (USD 4,65,000) on Thursday for failing to provide information to the Australian government's independent online safety watchdog, eSafety, in 2023 about how it tackled child sexual exploitation content. The judge also ordered X to pay AUD 1,00,000 (USD 71,000) of the eSafety Commissioner's court costs within 45 days.

X had argued it was not obliged to answer eSafety's questions as they had been sent in a transparency notice issued on 22 February, 2023 to Twitter, before X had merged with the company. The agency meanwhile said that X admitted it contravened Australia's Online Safety Act by failing to provide a report on the matter.

X also argued that eSafety did not say that the alleged contravention continued after 5 May, 2023, which fell during " a period of change and transition for the company," a reference to Elon Musk taking over in March 2023. *—PTI*

Israel National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir drew backlash for posting a video where he taunted the detained flotilla activists *—X @ITAMARBENGVIR*

After in'tl backlash, Israel deports flotilla activists

TEL AVIV, 21 MAY

Israel has released hundreds of activists who attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza and are in the process of deporting them, after international backlash over National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's video where he taunted the activists who were handcuffed and kneeling.

The Israel-based legal advocacy group, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, or Adalah, said on Thursday that most of the international activists are in transit to a civilian airport near the southern Israeli city of Eilat for deportation.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday he instructed that the activists be deported "as soon as possible," sharply rebuking Ben-Gvir.

Israel has every right to stop "provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters," he said, but scolded Ben-Gvir, whose actions were "not in line with Israel's values and norms."

Ben-Gvir released videos on Wednesday showing him walking among the approximately 430 detainees, mocking them and calling for their imprisonment. This drew significant international backlash from several countries – including some of which were seen as Israeli allies.

The flotilla, made up of more than 50 boats, departed for Gaza last week from Turkey. Organisers said they want to draw renewed attention to the conditions for nearly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza. *—PTI*

LANDMARK CASE

ICJ says right to strike protected by key labour treaty

THE HAGUE, 21 MAY

The United Nations' top court issued a landmark advisory opinion on the right to strike on Thursday, finding that a cornerstone labour treaty protects the ability of workers to walk off the job.

The International Court of Justice was asked in 2023 by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a UN agency, to settle an internal dispute over whether one of the ILO's conventions gives workers the right to strike.

Advisory opinions aren't legally binding but carry significant weight. The decision could have a worldwide impact on labour regulations, enshrining the right to strike in labour standards and international trade agreements.

Protests over fuel shortage in Kenya earlier this week *—PTI*

The convention has been ratified by 158 countries and is incorporated into UN labour standards, guidelines from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and international trade agreements.

During hearings in October, the court in The Hague heard from 18 countries and five international organisations, including the ILO, with a number of other countries submitting written arguments. The majority of participants favoured the right to strike.

"(This case) will affect the real rights of tens of millions of working people around the world," Harold Koh, representing the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), had argued. Roberto Suarez Santos, from the International Organisation of Employers, said the 1948 convention "neither explicitly nor implicitly covers the right to strike." Rita Yip, also representing the groups, dismissed the arguments as "inflammatory and alarmist". *—Agencies*

Gold prices rise for third day, settles at Rs 1.65L

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Gold prices increased by Rs 600 to Rs 1.65 lakh per 10 grams on Thursday, while silver rose to Rs 2.71 lakh per kilogram as traders remained cautiously optimistic despite geopolitical tensions. Gold extended gains for the third day, rising from Rs 1,64,900 to Rs 1,65,500, gaining Rs 2,700 over three sessions. Continued West Asian tensions and global inflation concerns supported buying, despite firm US Treasury yields. Silver also recovered, jumping Rs 5,000, aided by bargain buying and rising industrial demand. Analysts attributed demand to US-Iran conflicts and Strait of Hormuz disruptions, with a weaker rupee supporting prices. Internationally, spot gold declined slightly to USD 4,534.54 per ounce, while silver slipped nearly 1 per cent to USD 75.39.—*PTI*

JSW partners with Uber for EV cabs in India

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

JSW Group and Uber announced on Thursday that JSW Green Mobility, a wholly-owned company of the JSW Group, and Uber will work together to adapt EVs for Uber's platform in India. This is to help accelerate EV adoption per India's net-zero goals. The companies said that a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Parth Jindal of the JSW Group and Dara Khosrowshahi, Uber CEO in Mumbai last week. Uber said the partnership forms part of its efforts to expand access to EVs in India and build a more sustainable urban transportation network."By combining Uber's platform scale and mobility insights with JSW's growing automotive and clean mobility ambitions, we hope to contribute meaningfully to India's EV ecosystem," said Parth Jindal of the JSW Group. —*ANI*

'Anthropic may soon report first profitable quarter'

SAN FRANCISCO, 21 MAY

Anthropic could announce its first profitable quarter, with revenue expected to more than double to $10.9 billion in the June period, according to Reuters. The AI company may report an operating profit of $559 million, the report cited a source familiar with the matter. Previously, the firm reported $4.8 billion revenue in the March quarter. The company's growth has been driven by sales of its AI tools, including the popular Claude AI model. However, the June profit may not sustain throughout the year due to increased spending on AI compute infrastructure. Ongoing funding could raise its valuation above OpenAI's, with both companies and SpaceX preparing for public listings valued at over a trillion dollars. Anthropic's relationship with the Trump administration had recently soured but has likely improved. —*ANI*

BSE drops 135 pts, NSE ends flat

Sensex closed at 75,183.36, Nifty at 23,654.70

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Sensex and Nifty closed marginally lower after a volatile session on Thursday, driven by profit-taking in select IT, financial, and oil shares.

BSE Sensex declined 135.03 points, or 0.18 per cent, to settle at 75,183.36. During the day, it hit a high of 75,945.79 and a low of 74,996.78, gyrating 949.01 points. Meanwhile, NSE Nifty skidded 4.30 points, or 0.02 per cent, to end at 23,654.70.

Of the 30-Sensex firms—Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, HUL, Infosys, Bajaj Finserv and Airtel—were among the laggards. InterGlobe Aviation, Trent, Bharat Electronics and Adani Ports were among the winners.

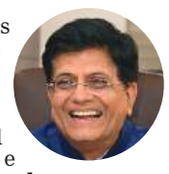
Among sectoral indices, IT declined the most, by 0.53 per cent, followed by Focused IT (0.52 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.46 per cent), Utilities (0.42 per cent), FMCG (0.42 per cent), and Bankex (0.24 per cent). However, Services jumped 1.59 per cent, followed by Capital Goods (1.29 per cent), Industrials (1.08 per cent), Commodities (0.91 per cent) and Telecommunication (0.80 per cent).

"Markets remained volatile and ended largely flat for yet another session on Thursday, extending the ongoing consolidation phase amid mixed global cues. The Nifty opened firm following stability in global markets; however, selling pressure in heavyweight counters across sectors capped the upside and gradually dragged the index lower as the session progressed," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Persistent foreign institutional outflows, elevated global bond yields, and concerns over inflationary pressures arising from high fuel prices continued to keep the undertone cautious, he added. —*PTI*

US team to visit India for trade talks next month: Piyush

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY



The US team is expected to visit India next month for trade negotiations, said Commerce Minister **Piyush Goyal**. Indian delegation met US counterparts in April to over bilateral trade agreement (BTA). US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit from May 23 for four days, to boost cooperation in trade, defence, and energy.

Meanwhile, Goyal highlighted ongoing efforts to contain the widening current account deficit (CAD), which rose to USD 13.2 billion in December. He warned that high gold and silver imports, along with a declining rupee, have increased trade deficits. The rupee has fallen 7 per cent this year, pressured by rising oil prices, geopolitical tensions, and US interest rate hikes.

Goyal urged citizens to reduce import-dependent spending to support the economy, and announced that the first India-GCC free trade talks will take place in late 2026. —*PTI*

IN FORWARD MARKETS

Rupee up to 96.43 after hitting 100

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

The rupee recovered from 100 per US dollar in the forward market, trading at 96.43 on Thursday, after US President Donald Trump indicated that negotiations with Iran were entering the final stages. The level suggests currency markets are pricing in a weakening bias for the USD/INR pair over the next 12 months, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.25 against the dollar, touching a high of 96.05 and a low of 96.60 in intraday trade. Investors, however, continued to gauge underlying geopolitical risks and oil price sensitivity, remaining cautious of potential flare-ups in Middle East tensions or sudden spikes in crude prices.

On Wednesday, the one-year forward rate crossed the psychologically significant 100-per-dollar threshold. In the spot market, the rupee hit a new low of 96.95 before closing at 96.86, also a record closing low. The rupee had gained on hopes of a trade deal but could not sustain those gains, said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP.

"The rupee has already weakened over 6 per cent since the Iran conflict intensified, with rising crude oil prices adding fuel to the fire. On Wednesday, USDINR almost knocked on the doors of 97, touching fresh lifetime lows near 96.96," CR Forex Advisors MD Amit Pabari said. —*PTI*

Spike in freight rates issue for steel sector: Tata Steel

RANCHI, 21 MAY

A 28-30 per cent surge in global freight costs amid the ing West Asia situation is emerging as the biggest challenge for India's steel industry, even as domestic operations and raw material supplies remain stable, a senior Tata Steel official said.

"For steel, the biggest impact is freight. Freight rates have gone up... First, the Russia-Ukraine war, and now the West Asia situation... This is definitely having a cascading effect on most countries," Tata Steel Vice-President (Corporate Services) DB Sundara Ramam said.

Despite global disruptions, the industry has so far maintained production levels, though rising freight and logistics costs are becoming a major concern for raw material movement, he said. Coal supplies from Australia and Indonesia remain operationally stable, but higher freight charges are pushing up input costs across the sector, he added.

Tata Steel imports around 78 per cent of its coking coal requirement, or nearly 12-13 million tonnes per annum, mainly from Australia, while the remaining 22 per cent comes from domestic mines in West Bokaro and Jharia, Ramam said. —*PTI*

TO CONSUMATE BY 15 JUNE

Adani to acquire 100% stake in Jaypee Fertilisers

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

- Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd on Thursday said it will acquire a 100 per cent stake in Jaypee Fertilisers & Industries from Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) for Rs 1,500 crore.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Thursday said it will acquire a 100 per cent stake in Jaypee Fertilisers & Industries from Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) for Rs 1,500 crore, as part of the National Company Law Tribunal-approved resolution plan for JAL. The acquisition is expected to be consummated not later than 90 days from 17 March, 2026.

APSEZ, in a regulatory filing, said the acquisition will consolidate the company's inland logistics presence and service capabilities in North India. It added that it with the company's ambition to expand its Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) network from 12 to 16 and warehousing capacity by four times by 2031.

Meanwhile, Adani Power said on the same day that it has entered into agreements to acquire a 24 per cent stake in Jaiprakash Power Ventures, the acquisition of the 180 MW thermal power plant of JAL located in Churk and 11.49 per cent shares of Prayagraj Power Generation Company Ltd, also held by JAL, among other related assets. The deals have been inked for about Rs 4,193.59 crore. —*PTI*

Parle sees surge in demand for Melody

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Parle Products has increased production of its Melody toffee following a significant surge in demand after a viral video showed Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting a pack of the candy to his Italian counterpart, Giorgia Meloni.

The company's Vice President Mayank Shah, on Thursday called it the "biggest of all campaigns" in the brand's history, appreciating Modi's endorsement of the "Swadeshi brand."

"The early feedback from distributors is that there is demand. Suddenly, we are seeing a spike," Shah said, adding that quick commerce and e-commerce channels had both seen a jump in sales since the previous morning.

He said searches for Melody on quick commerce platforms had also risen sharply, and that the company planned to leverage the development to promote the brand further. Production had been ramped up to meet heightened demand, including from abroad, he added.

WRONG SHARES UP FOR SECOND DAY

Shares of Parle Industries Ltd surged 4.95 per cent on Thursday, hitting the upper circuit limit of Rs 5.51 on the BSE for the second straight session as investors piled into the stock, confusing it with the maker of Melody toffees amid the 'Melody frenzy'.

Melody toffees are manufactured by Parle Products, which is not listed on any stock exchange. Parle Industries Ltd, by contrast, operates in infrastructure and real estate, and trades in paper products. —*PTI*

'No petrol, diesel shortage in India'

NEW DELHI/ JAIPUR, 21 MAY

There has been no shortage in crude oil supplies from Russia, and there is no shortage of petrol, diesel or LPG in the country, oil marketing company (OMC) said on Thursday.

OMC sources said India continues to remain in a surplus of petroleum products and is witnessing higher fuel sales at some retail outlets due to seasonal demand. On crude oil imports, the sources said supplies from Russia remain stable despite global geopolitical tensions.

Sales at some fuel stations are rising due to higher diesel demand during harvesting season and a shift by consumers to state-run retailers, as some private fuel companies charge higher prices.

Higher sales at public fuel stations were also driven by institutional and commercial buyers shifting from private stations charging higher international-linked prices.

The clarification from OMC sources comes as crude oil prices have remained volatile in recent weeks as markets closely track geopolitical developments and possible disruptions via the Strait of Hormuz.

HPCL REJECTS CLAIMS OF SHORTAGE

Congress leaders in Rajasthan demanded clarity on petrol, diesel and LPG availability amid reports of shortages and limited fuel supply at some petrol pumps. Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) on Thursday said fuel supplies across Rajasthan, including Jaipur, are adequate. —*Agencies*

Nvidia Q1 results surpass Wall Street expectations

NEW YORK, 21 MAY

Artificial intelligence chipmaker Nvidia's quarterly results surpassed Wall Street's expectations once again, fuelled by massive demand for its high-end AI chips.

The company said Wednesday it earned $58.32 billion, or $2.39 per share, in the February-April period, up from $18.78 billion, or 76 cents per share, in the same period a year earlier. Revenue jumped 85 per cent to $81.62 billion from $44.01 billion. Analysts, on average, were expecting earnings of $1.75 per share and revenue of USD 78.91 billion, according to a poll by FactSet.

"The buildout of AI factories — the largest infrastructure expansion in human history — is accelerating at extraordinary speed," said CEO Jensen Huang in a statement.

For the current quarter, Nvidia forecast revenue of about $91 billion. Analysts are forecasting $87.29 billion. As of Wednesday's close, Nvidia had a market value of USD 5.4 trillion. —*PTI*

Airtel launches Priority Postpaid

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Airtel postpaid customers will be automatically upgraded to "Priority Postpaid" plans, offering consistent speed even in crowded areas, said Airtel India CEO Shashwat Sharma. Prepaid customers can upgrade via the Airtel app.

Launched on 19 May, the Priority Postpaid 5G plans use network slicing technology to ensure faster, more reliable service during peak traffic times by creating dedicated network lanes.

Nokia highlighted its role in enabling network slicing technology, stating, "Our 5G core and slicing capabilities power differentiated connectivity for operators across the globe, including India." —*PTI*

Cyprus to play gateway for Indian firms in Europe

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides announced the launch of a trade office in Mumbai to promote cross-border partnerships, aiming to position the island as a gateway for Indian companies expanding into Europe. The 'Mumbai trade centre' will be operational from 1 September 2026.

Addressing the Cyprus-India Business Forum, Christodoulides said Cyprus can serve as a launchpad for Indian businesses seeking access to the EU, Eastern Mediterranean, Gulf, and North African markets from a stable European base.

He highlighted Cyprus's EU membership, access to over 450 million consumers, a 15 per cent corporate tax rate, and extensive double taxation treaties covering more than 65 countries, including India.

The President noted India increasingly uses Cyprus as an entry point into Europe, especially in technology and finance sectors.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis invited Cypriot firms to partner with the state's growth, emphasising maritime cooperation and renewable energy opportunities. —*PTI*

Zepto to float Rs 11,000 cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Zepto plans to launch its Rs 11,000-crore initial public offering (IPO) in July, sources said on Thursday. If the listing goes through, Zepto will join its publicly listed rivals Zomato and Swiggy.

Bengaluru-based Zepto, founded by Stanford dropouts Aadit Palicha and Kaivalya Vohra, reportedly aims to go public by 31 July. Having secured Sebi approval, it is now preparing to file its Updated Draft Red Herring Prospectus. Zepto filed for its IPO via the confidential route in December 2025.

According to a recent report by Bernstein, Zepto is pursuing a rare growth strategy focusing on market density and operational intensity rather than rapid geographic expansion. With a dark-store density of 21 per city — more than double its peers' average — Zepto's strategy centres on dense metro clusters, backed by a total footprint of 1,255 stores across 61 cities.

In October 2025, the company raised USD 450 million in funding by the California Public Employees' Retirement System at a valuation of USD 7 billion. It hit unicorn status in August 2023, after raising USD 200 million in its Series E funding round, valuing the startup at USD 1.4 billion. —*PTI*

TO GO PUBLIC NEXT MONTH

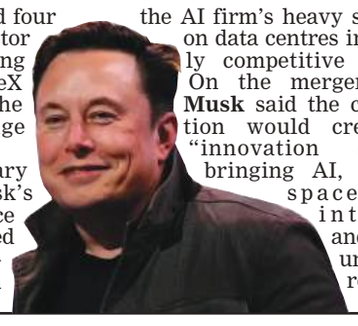
SpaceX IPO to make Musk world's first trillionaire

AUSTIN, 21 MAY

- Elon Musk is already the world's richest person but he could soon become the world's first trillionaire as SpaceX prepares to go public.

Elon Musk, who already stands as the world's richest person, could soon become the world's first trillionaire as his space & AI company prepares to go public. The listing is poised to be the biggest ever, surpassing Aramco's 2019 IPO, in which the Saudi oil giant raised USD 29.4 billion.

Musk's controls 85 per cent voting power of SpaceX through supervoting Class B shares, which carry 10 votes each against one vote for Class A shares. The shares are expected to list next month, giving Musk around four weeks to build investor support. The filing showed that SpaceX would trade on the Nasdaq exchange under SPCX.



SpaceX's February merger with Musk's artificial intelligence startup xAI strained the space company's finances, given the AI firm's heavy spending on data centres in a highly competitive market. On the merger, **Elon Musk** said the combination would create an "innovation engine" bringing AI, rockets, space-based internet, and media under one roof.

SpaceX also revealed that it has signed a deal with artificial intelligence startup Anthropic which will pay the Musk-owned company USD 1.25 billion a month for access to its compute data centres. The deal period extends till May 2029.

It remains unclear how much SpaceX would raise from the public, but papers filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) revealed a difficult financial picture, with losses mounting. The company reported a loss of USD 4.3 billion for the three months ended March. —*ANI*

NO MORE MAJOR LAYOFFS: ZUCKERBERG

SAN FRANCISCO, 21 MAY

Meta Platform CEO **Mark Zuckerberg** has told employees there will be no further widespread layoffs this year, Reuters reported. The announcement came on the same day the company cut around 10 per cent of its staff.

"I want to be clear that we do not expect other company-wide layoffs this year. I also want to acknowledge that we haven't been as clear as we aspire to be in our communication, and that's one area I want to make sure we improve," as per an internal company memo.

In an internal memo in April, the Facebook founder detailed a reorganisation plan that included cutting around 8,000 jobs and leaving 6,000 positions unfilled, according to NBC.

As part of the restructuring, Meta will move around 7,000 employees into new AI roles. Zuckerberg told the employees that success in the AI age isn't a given and that it is a pivotal moment that will define the next generation. —*ANI*

Anukul Roy was added to India A squad vs Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

All-rounder Anukul Roy was added to the India A squad for the upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka on Thursday, replacing Harsh Dubey, who received a maiden call-up to the senior Test and ODI squads.

A left-handed batsman and a left-arm spin bowler, Roy has represented Jharkhand in domestic cricket and plays for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL.

"The men's selection committee has added Anukul Roy to the India A squad for the upcoming tri-series in Sri Lanka. He replaces Harsh Dubey, who has received his maiden call-up to India's Test and ODI squads for the upcoming IDFC First Bank home series against Afghanistan," the BCCI said in a statement.

Roy first rose to prominence as the joint-highest wicket-taker (14 wickets) during India's victorious 2018 ICC Under-19 World Cup campaign.—*PTI*

Afghanistan women's cricket team to tour England

LONDON, 21 MAY

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Thursday announced that Afghanistan's refugee women's cricket team will tour England, starting on 22 June. ECB will arrange training facilities and T20 games for the Afghan side, which will also attend the final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 at Lord's. Most of the Afghan players are based out of Australia, after being displaced from their homeland following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021.

"Since being displaced from Afghanistan in 2021, these players have shown extraordinary resilience in continuing their cricket journeys, in incredibly challenging circumstances," said Clare Connor, ECB Deputy CEO and Managing Director of England Women.—*PTI*

Fed Cup: Athletes to vie for CWG berths from today

RANCHI, 21 MAY

A host of the country's top track and field stars will seek to impress national selectors for a 2026 Commonwealth Games berth during the four-day Senior Federation Competition beginning here on Friday. The meet is also significant as it is the first time the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) will conduct the SRY Gene Test at the national level in a bid to ensure that only biological females compete in the women's category. It's a mandatory once-in-a-lifetime test that will be conducted via a cheek swab or blood test.—*PTI*

-PTI

Diksha Dagar aims to go one better in Morocco

DAR ES SALAM, 21 MAY

A year after losing in a play-off, India's Diksha Dagar is back to challenge for the Lalla Meryem Cup in Morocco, hoping to go one better after a runner-up finish in the last edition.

The two-time LET winner, Diksha, is being accompanied by Pranavi Urs, Avani Prashanth and Hitaashee Bakshi this week.

A year ago, Cara Gainer of England shot a final round of 4-under 69 to get into a play-off where she claimed a clutch victory, defeating Diksha in a sudden-death playoff to secure her maiden win on the LET at Royal Golf Dar Es Salam.

Interestingly, both Gainer and Diksha will have their fathers as their caddies this week.—*PTI*

India to criminalise doping supply chain with jail terms

India recorded 260 positive doping cases out of 7,113 tested samples

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

The recently amended National Anti-Doping Act will be modified once again to criminalise the trafficking and distribution of prohibited substances to athletes, with a jail term of up to five years for suppliers, targeting even medical practitioners if they knowingly prescribe banned drugs.

The proposed amendments have been uploaded on the Sports Ministry's website for requisite feedback from the public, with the deadline for submission being 18 June.

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the amended bill will be tabled during the upcoming monsoon session of the Parliament after taking the feedback into consideration. "Whoever administers or applies to an athlete, for or in connection with doping in sport...shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to (five) years, or with a fine which may extend up to (two lakh) rupees, or both," the proposed amendment states.

India has topped the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) global list of dope offenders for three consecutive years. In its latest report, India recorded 260 positive doping cases out of 7,113 tested samples, representing a 3.6% positivity rate—more than double that of any other country globally. "Doping is no longer just a sporting violation; it has evolved into an organised ecosystem exploiting athletes," Mandaviya said in an interaction with the media here. "We only punish those who are consuming, but suppliers need to be targeted as well. So, whether it is a coach, a manager, a fellow athlete or anyone who has direct access to an athlete, those found guilty of being part of the supply chain will be prosecuted if these amendments go through," he added. Criminalisation of doping was a major talking point at the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network (GAIIN) Final Conference, and Mandaviya had announced the government's plan to bring in penal provisions to tackle the menace. —*PTI*

The Sports Ministry said, we only punish those who are consuming drugs, but suppliers need to be targeted as well -FREEPIK

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya —*PTI*

Discus thrower Banvir banned for seven years

Discus thrower Banvir Singh has been banned for seven years by the National Anti-Doping Agency's Appeal Panel (ADAP) for failing a dope test, adding two years to the punishment handed out to him by the Disciplinary Committee. Last year, NADA's Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) suspended Singh for five years, effective from December 23, 2024, after testing positive for the steroid methandienone.

He was also serving a two-year ineligibility period until December 22 this year for three whereabouts failures within 12 months. The ADAP enhanced the ban period in the latest update. NADA did not provide the reasons for the ADAP decision of the enhanced punishment. At 37 years of age, Singh could be one of the oldest athletes to be handed a suspension for doping.

Except for a second-place finish in the Indian Grand Prix in Bhubaneshwar in 2022, Singh has never been in the top three in his career.

Apart from this, long-distance runner Harendra Kumar has been handed another four-year suspension effective from August 2 this year. He was earlier handed a four-year ban by the ADDP. Effective from 3 August, 2022, after testing positive for the banned Darbepoetin (DEPO).

SUPER CHESS CLASSIC

Pragg held by Daniel; Firouzja withdraws

BUCHAREST, 21 MAY

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa was held to a draw by Romanian Deac Bogdan-Daniel while France's Alireza Firouzja decided to finally call it quits in the sixth round of the Super Chess Classic, part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Alireza, who played two games despite an ankle injury, decided it was not possible for him to continue and withdrew on the rest day of the ten-player, nine-round tournament. Germany's Vincent Keymer was the one to benefit from Firouzja's withdrawal as he stretched his lead to a full point after getting a walkover in this round.

While all the other games ended in draws, Keymer remained as the sole leader on 4.5 points, a full point clear of Holland's Jorden Van Foreest and Anish Giri, top-seeded American Fabiano Caruana and Praggnanandhaa, who all have 3.5 points each.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France and Wesley share the sixth spot on three points apiece, while World Championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan is close behind on 2.5 points. Romanian Deac Bogdan-Daniel is in ninth spot with two points, and Firouzja ended his campaign on one point from five games.

Deac Bogdan-Daniel might be the lowest-ranked, but the Romanian has time and again proved why he is the local pick for the main event as a wild card.

Praggnanandhaa went for complications right from the opening by going for the Stonewall Dutch, but Deac did not flinch and matched the Indian move-for-move. The pieces got traded at regular intervals, and even though Praggnanandhaa picked a temporary pawn, the draw was a foregone conclusion. It was over in 68 moves.

Sindarov was at the top of his game just a little over a month back when he won the Candidates to earn the right to challenge Gukesh for the next world championship match. However, here the Uzbek is yet to win a game after six rounds

Mukund loses as Indian challenge ends

BENGALURU, 21 MAY

India's campaign in the men's singles at the SM Krishna Memorial Open came to an end, but not before Mukund Sasikumar produced a stirring fight against second seed Alastair Grey of Great Britain in a quarterfinal battle that stretched two hours and 40 minutes here on Thursday.

The 29-year-old from Chennai, ranked 536 in the world, pushed the higher-ranked Grey (world No. 287) to the brink before eventually falling 6-2, 5-7, 6-7(3) in one of the most gripping matches of the tournament.

Meanwhile, former world No. 40 Ilya Ivashka continued his dominant run, brushing aside Alex Hernandez of Mexico 6-1, 6-2 in just 72 minutes to storm into the semifinals, while third seed Hamish Stewart of Great Britain was equally clinical, requiring only 57 minutes to dismantle sixth seed Ognjen Milic of Serbia 6-2, 6-1.

Fourth seed Petr Bar Biryukov overcame Malaysia's Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong 6-2, 5-7, 6-3 to complete the semifinal lineup.

Heavy rains disrupted the doubles quarterfinals, with only one match being completed while two others were in progress.

Mukund's performance was marked by resilience and fearless shot-making, as he fired 14 aces five more than Grey and committed fewer double faults despite facing sustained pressure. The Indian repeatedly clawed his way back into the contest and was within touching distance of a semifinal berth.

RCB seek top-place finish as SRH chase Qualifier 1 berth

HYDERABAD, 21 MAY

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad will both be eyeing a top-two finish when they square off in their final IPL league match here on Friday.

RCB currently sit atop the points table with 18 points and the best net run rate (NRR) of 1.065 among the 10 teams. A victory on Friday would guarantee them a first-place finish and two opportunities to reach the final. Sunrisers Hyderabad, meanwhile, are placed third with 16 points from 13 matches, level with Gujarat Titans but behind on NRR. SRH have an NRR of 0.350 compared to GT's 0.400, and their best chance of breaking into the top two would be to beat RCB convincingly and hope Chennai Super Kings defeat GT. RCB have once again enjoyed an outstanding campaign under skipper Rajat Patidar, blending explosive batting with disciplined bowling to emerge as title contenders for the second successive season. The talismanic Virat Kohli has continued to redefine consistency at the top of the order, collecting 542 runs from 13 matches, while Devdutt Padikkal has also enjoyed a good season. The experienced pace duo of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood has also played a pivotal role in RCB's success. Bhuvneshwar has been among the leading wicket-takers this season, making the new ball talk regularly, while Hazlewood has delivered impactful spells at crucial moments. —*PTI*

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's team during an Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 T20 cricket match -*PTI*

RCB VS CSK @ M. Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru
7.30 pm IST

PANDYA WAS FINED 10 PER CENT OF MATCH FEE

MUMBAI, 21 MAY

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has been fined 10 per cent of his match fee and handed one demerit point for abuse of cricket equipment after he forcefully knocked the bails of the wicket during a frustrating spell in the IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders here.Pandya was found to have breached Level 1 of the Code as he "knocked the bails of the wicket with force while walking back to his run-up" during the match that MI lost by four wickets at the Eden Gardens here on Wednesday.

KKR chased down the target of 148 with seven balls to spare, and Pandya returned wicketless from his two overs while conceding 13 runs."Hardik Pandya was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to 'abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during a Match'," the IPL said in a statement."The incident occurred on the fourth ball of the 10th over of the second innings of the match, when Hardik Pandya, while walking back to his run-up, knocked the bails of the wicket with force."Accumulation of four to seven demerit points leads to a one-match suspension in the IPL. —*PTI*

YOU NEVER WRITE OFF ROHIT, KOHLI'S PARTICIPATION IN 2027 ODI WC: PONTING

NEW DELHI, 21 MAY

Australian legend Ricky Ponting feels Indian superstars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are doing all they can to last till the ODI World Cup in South Africa in October-November 2027.

Having retired from Tests last year, the former India captains are one-format players. Outside 50-over cricket, the majority of their game time comes from the IPL. While Kohli has redefined his consistency levels in the IPL, Rohit too has done alright despite being held back by a hamstring injury.

Ponting, who captained Australia to two ODI World Cup titles in 2003 and 2007, said one can never write off champions like Kohli and Rohit. "I can see them pushing ahead and trying to get there. One thing I've always said about champion players is you never say no. You never write them off," Ponting, the head coach of Punjab Kings in the IPL, told PTI. "Virat's been a good example of that again through this IPL. He's not playing as much international cricket as he once was, but that determination and want to win are still there. Rohit Sharma has turned up at this IPL in better physical condition than I've seen him probably in about 10 or 12 years. "So the passion is still there for those guys to push on and make themselves the best players they can be. So like I said, you never say never," added the Australian icon. —*PTI*

FRENCH OPEN 2026

Sinner and Djokovic in opposite halves

PARIS, 21 MAY

Jannik Sinner, chasing his maiden French Open title to achieve the Career Grand Slam, will begin this year's campaign at Roland Garros with an opening-round clash against local wildcard Clement Tabur, as per the draw ceremony held in Paris on Thursday.

World No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz, the two-time defending champion, has withdrawn from the tournament due to a wrist injury. In the Spaniard's absence, German World No. 3 Alexander Zverev, the 2024 runner-up, is the second seed and takes on Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi in the first round. Novak Djokovic, eyeing a record-breaking 25th Major, meets big-serving Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard.

Three-time champion Djokovic, who is also looking to create history by becoming the oldest man to win a Grand Slam at the age of 38, and Zverev are in the same half and expected to meet in the semifinals. In the upper half, top seed Sinner is projected to take on fourth-seeded Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime for a place in the final. Sinner, who became only the second man in history after Djokovic to complete the Career Golden Masters during last week's Italian Open, is currently on a 29-match winning streak. The 24-year-old Italian's first tricky test could be against the 30th-seeded Frenchman Corentin Moutet in the third round. The duo had met in the fourth round of the clay Major in 2024, and Sinner had to fight back from a set down to win 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-1. Sinner also has ninth-seeded Kazakh Alexander Bublik and fifth-seeded American Ben Shelton in his quarter and could meet either of them for a place in the semifinals. For Djokovic, a potential third round against Brazil's Joao Fonseca or Croatia's Dino Prizmic the latter defeated the Serbian in the round of 16 in Rome is on the cards. —*PTI*

East Bengal crowned champions of ISL

KOLKATA, 21 MAY

East Bengal FC were crowned champions of the Indian Super League for the very first time here on Thursday, ending a 22-year title drought in the country's top-tier competition and quenching their passionate fans' yearning for silverware after a thrilling five-horse race to the top prize.East Bengal, one of the country's most decorated football clubs alongside its arch-rivals Mohun Bagan Super Giant, emerged triumphant after a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Inter Kashi at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan, even as Mohun Bagan, another contender for the prize alongside Mumbai City FC, Punjab City and Bengaluru FC heading into the decisive final round of fixtures, rallied to beat Sporting Club Delhi 2-1 at Yuba Bharati Krirangan. Mumbai FC beat Punjab FC 2-0 in their face-off, while Odisha FC and Jamshedpur FC played out a goalless draw in an inconsequential game. —*PTI*